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The Battle Against Human Sex Trafficking: A Faith-Focused Approach Toward Making a Difference

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

THE BATTLE AGAINST HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING:
A FAITH-FOCUSED APPROACH TOWARD MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
NANCY VANDERROEST
PORTLAND, OREGON
FEBRUARY 2022



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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the Dissertation Committee on February 28, 2022
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Kari, who has fought the fight and claimed victory over the pain of loss and the difficulties that life has laid in front of her on her passage of breaking the chains of despair and broken dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my family for their support and understanding during this journey to achieve my Doctorate of Ministry. The path has not been an easy one but the rewards far outweigh the arduous journey. You are appreciated more than words can say and I love you with all of my being.

EPIGRAPH

He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him. He began by saying to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21)

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PREFACE

My work with human sex trafficking victims as a Licensed Professional Counselor has been both heart-breaking as well as heart-touching. Victims of trafficking are often hurting souls trying to find their way back to a peace beyond all understanding. Through Christ, we can be the Light-carriers for these individuals by opening a door of unconditional love to them. Helping a victim to become a survivor means to shine God's Light on the broken individual (through awareness and compassion) to give them the opportunity to break the chains of slavery that bind them.

GLOSSARY

Branding — A tattoo or on a victim that indicates ownership by a trafficker.

Caught A Case — A term that refers to when a perpetrator or victim has been arrested and charged with a crime.

Choosing Up — The process by which a different trafficker takes “ownership” of a victim.

Circuit — A series of cities among which prostituted people are moved.

Daddy — The term a trafficker will often require his victim to call him.

Date — The exchange when prostitution takes place. A victim is said to be “with a date” or “dating.”

Exit Fee — The money a pimp will demand from a victim who is thinking about trying to leave. It will be a substantial sum to discourage her from leaving. Most pimps never let their victims leave freely.

Family — The term used to describe the other individuals under the control of the same trafficker. He plays the role of father (“Daddy”) while the group fulfills the need for a “family.”

Finesse Pimp/Romeo Pimp — One who prides himself on controlling others, mainly through psychological manipulation. Although he may shower his victims with gifts (especially during the recruitment phase), the threat of violence is always present.

Gorilla Pimp — A trafficker who controls his victims almost entirely through physical violence and force.

“John” (Buyer) — An individual who pays for or trades something of value for sexual acts.

Kiddie Stroll — An area known for prostitution that features younger victims.

Lot Lizard — Term for a person who is being prostituted at truck stops.

Pimp Circle — When several pimps encircle a victim to intimidate through verbal and physical threats in order to discipline the victim or force her to choose up.

Quota — A set amount of money that a trafficking victim must make each night before she can come “home.” Quotas are often set between \$300 and \$3000. If the victim returns without meeting the quota, she is typically beaten and sent back out on the street.

Seasoning — A combination of psychological manipulation and physical intimidation, beatings, deprivation of food or sleep, and isolation from friends or family. Seasoning is designed to break down a victim’s resistance and ensure compliance.

Squaring Up — Attempting to escape or exit prostitution.

Stable — A group of victims who are under the control of a single pimp.

The Game/The Life — The subculture of prostitution, complete with rules, a hierarchy of authority, and language. Referring to the act of trafficking as ‘the game’ gives the idea that it can be an easy way to make money, when the reality is much harsher.

Track (a/k/a Stroll or Blade) — An area of town known for prostitution activity. This can be the area around a group of strip clubs and pornography stores or a particular stretch of street or a certain part of the city.

Trade Up/Trade Down — To move a victim like merchandise between traffickers. A perpetrator may trade one girl for another or trade with exchange of money.

Trick — Committing an act of prostitution or the person buying it. A victim is said to be “turning a trick” or “with a trick.”

Turn Out — To be forced into prostitution or a person newly involved in prostitution.¹

¹ Linda Smith, *Renting Lacy: A Story of American Prostituted Children* (Vancouver: Shared Hope International, 2009).

ABSTRACT

The lack of Christian involvement in the fight against human sex trafficking is evident when researching the various causes faith-based organizations focus on. The causes have often been denomination or single-entity driven. Yet, the focal point should be cause-driven and compassion-led. For Christians, the key is to uncover the will of God to find where God is at work—and then to join Him there.

This dissertation reviews how Christian entities have often shied away from the battle against human sex trafficking because of the scope of the problem and because of the sexual stigma attached to it. Yet, Christ embodied the mission to serve the broken individuals of the world through compassion and love.

Section 1 addresses the problem itself: aspects of human trafficking, in-depth analysis of the victim, and a clearer explanation about who a trafficker is. Understanding the victim and the trafficker provides insight into the inner side of the problem by placing a face on both the survivor and the perpetrator.

Section 2 offers alternative approaches to the crime of human sex trafficking. Currently, trafficking is a hot topic in the world; yet, so little has been done to help faith-focused entities begin to join in the fight against trafficking. The scope of trafficking and its many facets may seem to be insurmountable. Yet, each small step can make a difference for a victim who is living in the chains of slavery that trafficking entails.

Section 3 offers guidance and direction for faith-focused entities to play a role in the battle in order to claim victory over this horrific crime. It is crucial for Christians to take a stand against trafficking by getting involved in the battle to bring Christ's love to the broken victims and break the chains of slavery that human sex trafficking imposes.

SECTION 1:

MODERN DAY SLAVERY

Introduction

She likes swimming, Sponge Bob, Mexican food, writing poetry, getting her nails painted (light pink is her favorite color), and Harry Potter books (plus she thinks Daniel Radcliffe is “fine”). This Christmas, she really wants an iPod but would settle for some sweatsuits, preferably pink. Sometimes she’s petulant-pouting and sullen but mostly she’s open and eager to be loved. When she smiles, huge dimples crease her chubby face and are still capable, as she moves into awkward adolescence, of melting hearts. She’s much like any other eleven-year-old girl in America except for one critical difference. Over the last year of her life, she’s been trafficked up and down the East Coast by a twenty-nine-year-old pimp and sold nightly on Craigslist to adult men who ignore her dimples and her baby fat and purchase her for sex.²

Understanding the Problem

Human trafficking is present in our communities every day and millions of individuals across the world are victims. It is the second largest criminal enterprise in the world and is a nearly \$150 billion-dollar industry.³ There are estimated to be over 40 million victims worldwide who are being trafficked and it disproportionately affects the most vulnerable populations, including women and children, victims of previous abuse, and runaway youth.⁴ It is not a secret!

² Rachel Lloyd, *Girls Like Us* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 1.

³ Ronald Chambers, “Caring for Human Trafficking Victims: A Description and Rationale for the Medical Safe Haven Model in Family Medicine Residency Clinics,” *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, Vol. 54 (September, 2019): 346.

⁴ Chambers, “Caring for Human Trafficking Victims,” 346.

There has not been a definitive path for faith-based organizations to play a vital role in seeking justice and salvation for trafficking victims. Yet, faith-focused individuals and leaders have a responsibility to become more informed about human trafficking to equip the faith community with the knowledge of awareness and enlightenment. It is the first step towards helping set people free, both spiritually and physically, of the bondage of human trafficking.

Helping organizations and individuals of faith see beyond the stigma of sexual abuse and look instead at the broken individual who is struggling to break the chains of slavery is the key. The question is: how can we make a difference?

The goal of this dissertation is to help faith-focused individuals become aware of the problem of sexual human trafficking and, through this awareness, provide them with the opportunity to become ambassadors for the sexual trafficking victim. Organizations of faith and their leaders can then open the door to a community support system already in place to help the victim take the first step toward making the needed changes in their lives to transition from “victim” to “survivor.” Within all people of faith there is a desire to help hurting individuals in our communities but how to help is the burning question.

Defining Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. There are differences in the definition of trafficking, but most generally it is defined as “the recruitment, harboring, transporting, obtaining, or maintaining a person by means of force, fraud, or coercion.”⁵

⁵ Nita Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective on Human Trafficking in the United States* (Xulon Press, 2011), 15.

It can also include the trade of women and children for prostitution or other immoral purposes. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines human trafficking as a sex trade in which a commercial sex act is induced by fraudulent force or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.⁶ While human trafficking is a serious federal crime, it is a crime that is often difficult to uncover and to prosecute.

Although there are different types of trafficking (including forced labor and debt bondage), sex trafficking is the most recognized form of human trafficking and affects mostly women and children (although men can also be trafficked).⁷ It involves forced engagement in acts of commercial sex. Any child under the age of 18 in the United States is considered a trafficking victim if they have been involved in an act of commercial sex. Nearly 80% of trafficking victims are female and nearly half are under the age of 18.⁸

Learning the signs of who the victims of sexual human trafficking are and what creates victimization and then helping organizations of faith to recognize the face of the trafficker are necessary components to helping fight the battle against trafficking. It is through awareness that provides the opportunity to reach out and make a difference. But how does one become aware of the trafficking world around them? It is important to understand the prevalence of the problem.

⁶ Theresa Flores, *The Slave Across the Street* (Boise: Ampelon Publishing, 2019), 180.

⁷ Louise Shelley, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* (Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.

⁸ Amy Joy, *Human Trafficking 101: Stories, Stats and Solutions* (Independently Published, 2019), 35.

Numbers Tell the Story

Sexual human trafficking is a market-driven criminal industry that is based on the principles of supply and demand, like drugs or arms trafficking.⁹ Many factors make children and adults vulnerable to human trafficking. However, human trafficking does not exist solely because many people are vulnerable to exploitation. Instead, human trafficking is fueled by a demand for commercial sex. Human traffickers are those who victimize others in their desire to profit from the existing demand.¹⁰ To ultimately solve the problem of human trafficking, it is essential to address these demand-driven factors, as well as to change the market incentives that include high-profit and low-risk for traffickers.¹¹

The International Labor Organization estimates that over 40 million people are being trafficked worldwide every day.¹² Providing the link between supply and demand are the traffickers, who can range from large scale crime organizations to loose networks to individuals.¹³ As the demand increases, the victims increase. In *God in a Brothel*, the author shares a story about a common trafficking scenario in Honduras:

Marie was no exception. At the age of eleven or twelve, she had been casually raped and discarded by a group of men in her local neighborhood in one of the many squalid barrios of Honduras. Maria became pregnant as a result, and after

⁹ Linda Smith, *Invading the Darkness* (Shared Hope International, 2018), 175.

¹⁰ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 60.

¹¹ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 60.

¹² Cathy Zimmerman and Ligia Kiss, "Human Trafficking and Exploitation: A Global Health Concern," *LPoS Med* 14(11): e1002437 (2017): 1.

¹³ Shelly, *Human Trafficking*, 263.

she had her baby, she was, like any mother, desperate to find a way to support her child.

Sold to a brothel by a group of traffickers who had ensnared her at the border, Maria was told she now had to pay off her purchase price or debt before she could be free. With threats of further rape and beatings hanging over her head, Maria did her best to sell her small body to the many locals, tourists and miscreants who found their way onto her dance floor.¹⁴

Human trafficking is happening right now in our backyard, not just in other parts of the world. Approximately 800,000 children are reported missing in the United States every year and nearly 2,200 every day.¹⁵ According to the President and CEO of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Ernie Allen, “Researchers also estimated that one-third of street prostitutes in the United States are less than 18. With the explosion in the sale of kids for sex online, it is clear that more kids are at risk today than ever before.”¹⁶

Sex Trafficking Statistics

Sex trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. Unlike most statistics, human trafficking has a pulse. It includes our daughters, sisters, nieces, and sometimes even sons in its snare. Every number represented in these stats has a name and is someone’s child. However, experts suggest that these numbers are low, because the lack of awareness of human trafficking can lead to significant under-reporting. In a

¹⁴ Daniel Walker, *God in a Brothel* (Downers Grove: IV Press, 2011), 28-29.

¹⁵ Nita Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America and What We Can Do To Stop It*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 30.

¹⁶ Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America*, 31.

five-year period ending to 2019, reports of suspected child sex trafficking had risen 846%.¹⁷

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported more than 2.3 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation to law enforcement in 2018.¹⁸ Yet, how accurate are these numbers? These numbers are estimates, which means there are possibly hundreds (or even thousands) of victims that are not yet identified. Victims are difficult to distinguish and often the community does not know what to look for and are unaware of the human trafficking incidents that are taking place around them.

Why Trafficking Exists

Human trafficking exists mainly because of the huge profit opportunities. “Human traffickers value profit over life. It is all about the money.”¹⁹ The annual average profit generated by each woman forced into sexual trafficking can be as high as \$300,000 per victim.²⁰

Human trafficking also exists because of demand, which fuels the growth of trafficking.²¹ Sex slavery today has made sexual services more available, which has increased demand. One of the largest contributing factors is the internet, which has

¹⁷ Joy, *Human Trafficking* 101, 12.

¹⁸ Joy, *Human Trafficking* 101, 13.

¹⁹ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 104.

²⁰ Joy, *Human Trafficking* 101, 31.

²¹ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 175.

created a global market for traffickers.²² It makes pornography more readily accessible, increasing men's addiction to it and enhancing the demand. The pornography industry is a profitable business world, with estimates of financial benefit being \$12 billion annually in the United States.²³

Human trafficking has been recorded throughout history. Even in biblical times, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and though sometimes disputed, some church traditions have long suggested Mary Magdalene may have been a prostitute.²⁴ But there is an increase in trafficking in today's world. With the prevalence of pornography, a predator's ability to connect with broken individuals through the internet and the difficulties in tracking perpetrators have allowed human trafficking to become one of the world's largest criminal industries.

The first federal law regarding sex trafficking was enacted in the year 2000 in the United States. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act was enacted to protect victims of trafficking. Yet, loopholes continued to exist.

The passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000 by the United States Congress, introduced with enormous bipartisan support, was signed by President Clinton and subsequently reauthorized under the Bush administrations in 2003, 2005, and 2007. The TVPA raised awareness of the problem, addressed prevention, facilitated prosecution, and provided resources to aid numerous victims of trafficking. The legislation combines a focus on victims' assistance with stiff sanctions for traffickers.²⁵

²² Melissa Farley, *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress* (Binghamton: Haworth Press, 2003), 116.

²³ Andrea Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the United States: Theory, Research, Policy, and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 40.

²⁴ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages are quoted from the NIV version.

²⁵ Shelley, *Human Trafficking*, 129.

Political corruption and high crime allow for increases in trafficking potential. In addition, globalization has provided a worldwide platform for traffickers. A study on trafficking done at John Hopkins University revealed:

Traffickers, taking advantage of transparent borders, broadband communication, and political and economic upheaval as well as mass migration of people, have preyed on the vulnerable and have made trafficking into a booming business as well as a tragic fixture in our times. The continued treatment of millions of women and children as a commodity speaks volumes of the global community's failure to offer protection and opportunity across gender and age. The rapid proliferation of human trafficking and related brutality casts a dark shadow over the benefits that globalization has offered to many. Globalization has made the world a smaller place, but at a cost to many of the most vulnerable.²⁶

The consequences of trafficking on the world are severe and diverse. The political aspects of trafficking undermine democracy, rules of law, and accountability of governments.²⁷ The corruption undermines the governmental system while the profits bring about conflicts. Traffickers also pose a threat to national security.

Yet, research on human trafficking has not moved beyond estimating the scale of the problem. Little empirical research has been done on the effectiveness of governmental policies and organizational efforts to combat the problem.²⁸ Even less is known about trafficking of children. Research has shown that misconceptions of child trafficking result in the mislabeling of victims as child prostitutes, which further endangers the child.²⁹ This is because prostitution is often thought of as a choice that a

²⁶ Walker, *God in a Brothel*, 187.

²⁷ Shelley, *Human Trafficking*, 66.

²⁸ Stephanie Mace, "Child Trafficking: A Case Study of the Perceptions of Child Welfare Professionals in Colorado" (doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University, 2013): 2.

²⁹ Mace, "Child Trafficking," 3.

person makes rather than a situation which they were forced into. Yet, when youth are involved, prostitution is never an acceptable term. Recognizing that survivors are victims rather than criminals has led many states to redefine prostitution as sexual abuse.

The Victim

Profile of the Victim

There's a major difference between slavery in the old days and slavery today. In the past, slaves were captured. But today, most human trafficking victims have consented to go with their captors.³⁰ Victims provide consent because they are lied to. They are duped by someone charming, smart, and narcissistic enough to destroy their victims' lives in the most terrifying of ways. Perpetrators lack compassion to care about people as people. It's all about the money and the benefit for them.

For traffickers, the human cost to their victims isn't of importance to them. The victims have no human value in their eyes; other than to line their own pockets with money. Yet, recognizing a trafficker is not easy. It has been thought that traffickers wore flashy clothes and carried golden canes. But traffickers today can be people who are considered virtuous members of your community.³¹ City leaders, political legislators, and even church leaders can be traffickers without knowledge of their hidden identity. Traffickers have three things in common: manipulation, power, and control.³² Their goal

³⁰ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 149.

³¹ Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America*, 197.

³² Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America*, 197.

is to make money in an industry with high profits and little risk. Their victims are often innocent individuals who have been ‘coerced’ into a way of life they don’t know how to escape. Author Theresa Flores shares a part of her story in *The Slave Across the Street*:

This is my story of a girl from the suburbs who was manipulated, coerced, and threatened into terrible things against her will, while others profited. What is most important is that people become aware that this is happening in the United States, in cities and small towns, to kids of every color, every socioeconomic background, to kids with two parents, or one parent, or no parents. It is vital that people understand how easily this can happen to any child.”³³

Perpetrators. Because of the internet, having sex with children in the United States is as easy as ordering a pizza.³⁴ That’s because the U.S. is one of the world’s largest destinations for sex tourism. Men create the demand for sex tourism, which traffickers are eager to supply. It is the sex buyers who drive the sex industry and are in control.³⁵ Buyers try to justify or normalize their actions by reflecting that their tourist and business dollars are providing a stimulus to the local economy, but their underlying motives are the same: self-fulfillment through sexual pleasure.³⁶

According to the national reporting agency, The Polaris Project, approximately 300,000 children are traded for sex annually and most started at the age of average age of 12.³⁷ The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 40% of confirmed sex trafficking

³³ Flores, *The Slave Across the Street*, 8.

³⁴ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 33.

³⁵ Walker, *God in a Brothel*, 77.

³⁶ Walker, *God in a Brothel*, 82.

³⁷ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 34-36.

victims are black, even though African Americans make up only 13% of the United States population.³⁸

Pedophiles. Pedophilia is the primary sexual attraction of adults to children.

Pedophiles are predatory. They invest many hours of preparation to secure their desired goal.³⁹ Pedophiles join together and organize clubs that provide supplier manuals and travel guides, which help members avoid prosecution and detection as they travel.⁴⁰ Pedophiles are virtually unrecognizable and can be almost anyone.

Children are being victimized through prostitution, pornography, stripping, brothels, and other forms of commercial sex business because of consumer demand.⁴¹ Minor sex trafficking cases are growing exponentially, making it crucial that creative approaches to assisting youth are adopted.⁴² In the book *Stolen*, the author explains the prevalence of traffickers in our communities:

Even though not everyone is vulnerable to being picked up by traffickers, kidnapped, lured, manipulated, or taken, we need to be aware of the factors that exist and protect the innocent and susceptible. Traffickers lurk everywhere. They go into the malls, they sit in McDonald's, they infiltrate our school systems, and they take their own kids to the park and to hotel pools.⁴³

³⁸ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 91.

³⁹ Walker, *God in a Brothel*, 128.

⁴⁰ Walker, *God in a Brothel*, 128.

⁴¹ Kimberly Kotria and Beth Ann Wommack, "Sex Trafficking Of Minors in the U.S.: Implications for Policy, Prevention and Research." *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk* 2, no. 1 (2011): 1.

⁴² Kotria and Wommack, "Sex Trafficking of Minors," 9.

⁴³ Katariina Rosenblatt, *Stolen: The True Story of a Sex Trafficking Survivor* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing), 221.

Victim Vulnerabilities

Victims often reflect risk factors that make them more vulnerable to traffickers who are always on the search for their next target. One common characteristic of prostituted girls is a history of childhood sexual abuse. In a study done with youth in a specialized treatment program in Florida, findings revealed that 86-91% of the youth had previous sexual abuse and/or other traumatic experiences prior to their exploitation into trafficking.⁴⁴ The history of the childhood trauma experienced in trafficking may include physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse.

Girls involved in trafficking are more likely to come from a home where addiction was present. Also, young women who are more susceptible to trafficking have often witnessed domestic violence in their home, which helps to normalize their trafficking world.

The foster care system has a high prevalence of evasive human trafficking. It is estimated that over 60% of all child sex trafficking victims have histories in the child welfare system.⁴⁵ Foster care youth are often targeted because they are often already broken victims of trauma and abuse, which are exactly what traffickers are looking for.

Victim Risk Factors

Understanding the grooming process is an important aspect of identifying and increasing awareness of human trafficking. The process begins by building trust.

⁴⁴ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 102.

⁴⁵ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 103.

Traffickers know the behaviors that indicate vulnerabilities in potential victims.⁴⁶

Traffickers look for signs of risky or deviant behaviors in adolescents as a common risk factor. Abuse, poverty, and mental disabilities can all be invitations to traffickers of potential vulnerable individuals.⁴⁷

Childhood Abuse. Child abuse and neglect often precipitate developmental disabilities, socializing problems, and poor school performance. Depression can also be a result. During traumatic events, the brain sends a signal to either run away or stay and fight. When neither flee or flight is an option, the brain goes into shut-down mode and freezes, which affects decision-making and problem solving.⁴⁸ This leaves a child more vulnerable to continued abuse. Author Jennifer Castle tells about her first unwanted sexual experience in *A Healing Awakened*:

My mom was a single parent and worked long hours, so she would take us to our grandmother's (her former foster mother), who ran a daycare there. While the rest of the children went down for naps, my uncle would take me into the woods to his tree house and rape me. One day when we arrived, there was someone else waiting by the tree house. I was confused and thought maybe we were not going up there that day. I was wrong. This other man forced me up the ladder with him while my uncle waited below. The man made me drink a beer he had in his hand, saying it would make it easier and that it would make me feel good. He poured it into my mouth, and I had no choice but to swallow. It hated it, as it didn't make me feel good at all but made me sick to my stomach. He came in close and started to undress me. He smelled like the disgusting beer he forced down my throat. As I moved away and said no, my uncle climbed up and told me I had to do what I was told. I cooperated with the man, all the other men after that.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Stacey Litam, "Human Sex Trafficking in America: What Counselors Need to Know," *The Professional Counselor* 7, no. 1 (June 2017): 48.

⁴⁷ Litam, "Human Sex Trafficking in American," 49.

⁴⁸ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 105.

⁴⁹ Jennifer Castle, *A Healing Awakened* (Middletown: Legacy Sparrow LLC, 2018), 18-22.

Studies reveal that up to 90% of prostituted women have histories of childhood abuse.⁵⁰ Problematic home life is related to runaway or throwaway status. Runaway youth are those who choose to leave home for a period of time. Children often run away from home because of abuse, neglect, or even drug use by their parents.⁵¹ Throwaway youth are children whose parents kick them out of the house or abandon them. This can be because of the child abusing drugs or the parent's drug abuse, friction within the home, or parents who reject a child's identity (LGBTQ).⁵² The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported one in five runaways are at risk of forced sexual exploitation.⁵³

Domestic Abuse Within the Home. Victims of trafficking are more likely to come from a home where addiction was present.⁵⁴ In addition, trafficking victims have often witnessed domestic violence in their home, which helps to normalize their trafficking world.⁵⁵ The brains of children experiencing trauma can become conditioned to seek out and accept the lies and coercion by predators, making it nearly impossible to escape their childhood realities.⁵⁶ The themes of trauma and abandonment often begin in childhood and create a lifelong vulnerability.

⁵⁰ Farley, *Prostitution*, 172.

⁵¹ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 96.

⁵² Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 96.

⁵³ Litam, "Human Sex Trafficking In America," 45.

⁵⁴ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 96.

⁵⁵ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 97.

⁵⁶ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 104.

Sexual Abuse. A common factor in trafficking victims is sexual abuse. Research through the Child Welfare Supplemental Survey reflected that nearly 50% of sex trafficking victims had been victims of sexual assault while over 90% reported a history of child maltreatment.⁵⁷ Child sexual assault creates an open door into human trafficking.

Traffickers are predatory in nature and skilled at identifying vulnerable people. LGBTQ individuals are especially at risk of trafficking because of increased rates of high-risk behaviors and homelessness.⁵⁸ According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, sexual minority youth are twice as likely to experience sexual abuse before the age of 12 and over seven times more likely to become victims of sexual violence.⁵⁹

Race. People of color are often targets for traffickers. A U.S. Department of Justice report stated that more than 40% of confirmed sex trafficking victims were African American. The same report found that 23% were Hispanic, and nearly 5% were Asian.⁶⁰ Those who are racially marginalized in society are disproportionately exposed to the risk factors of victimization: poverty, less education opportunities, and increased involvement in foster care systems.⁶¹

Mental Disabilities. Intellectual disabilities also heighten vulnerability. Low intelligence disability increases susceptibility to sex trafficking, because of limited

⁵⁷ Debra Schilling Wolfe, “Foster Care Youth at Risk for Child Sex Trafficking,” *Social Work Today* (Jan 2018): 2.

⁵⁸ Litam, “Human Sex Trafficking in America,” 50.

⁵⁹ Litem, “Human Trafficking in America,” 50.

⁶⁰ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 91.

⁶¹ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 90.

understanding about their rights to decline sex by the intended victim. In addition, traffickers often purposely target vulnerable individuals.⁶² They can tell by the way someone talks, walks, or even the way they look. Just answering a question can often be a sign for traffickers that a vulnerability lies within the potential victim. This tells the trafficker how easy it will be to trick, lure, or coerce the individual into trafficking. A trafficker may then spend months grooming the individual, because in the end, this victim is where the money is.

Youth in Foster Care. Children in the foster care system are often the targets of traffickers. Children may be at an increased risk for sexual exploitation because of multiple placements in private homes and group homes.⁶³ A study noted that close to two-thirds of children investigated as victims of trafficking had a history of child abuse and prior child protective services involvement. A Child Welfare Supplemental Survey further indicated that nearly 95% of trafficking victims interviewed reported a history of child abuse with approximately 50% experiencing sexual abuse.⁶⁴

Foster care youths are more susceptible to trafficking because those who seek to exploit youth will target those who are vulnerable. Foster youth often experience a lack of belonging or a connection with their caretakers, creating the feeling that no one cares

⁶² Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 94.

⁶³ Wolfe, "Foster Care Youths at Risk," 1.

⁶⁴ Wolfe, "Foster Care Youths At Risk," 2.

about them.⁶⁵ This leads to instances of running away from their foster home, leaving them even more vulnerable on the streets.

The foster care system has a high prevalence of evasive human trafficking. Foster care involvement changes the experiences of childhood and impacts future choices for children in care.⁶⁶ Foster care youth are targeted because they are often already broken victims of trauma and abuse, which are exactly what traffickers are looking for. Foster care youth often experience a lack of belonging and feel less support from their caregivers due to the disconnection aspect of foster care.

Recruitment

More than 70% of runaways encounter a child predator within the first 48 hours of leaving their home.⁶⁷ Due to an increase in internet access, there has been a drastic drop in the amount of time between a child running away or being thrown out of their home, and a trafficker finding them. Many young individuals access social media and leave messages that can be accessible to others when they are leaving home. Traffickers are very alert to pick up these messages and “rescue” the victim by offering them love and security. In the book *Stolen*, the author shares her personal story of being chosen:

Looking back, I now know I was chosen even before I was talked to by my recruiter. I’m sure she spotted the longing in my eyes and the loneliness that I projected out of my hurts and agony. As I would learn later, predators watch their victims before they target them. They especially seek lonely and abused children who display their vulnerability by the way they talk, their clothes, their general

⁶⁵ Wolfe, “Foster Care Youths At Risk,” 2.

⁶⁶ Wolfe, “Foster Care Youths At Risk,” 2.

⁶⁷ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 54.

demeanor, or the helplessness in their eyes. Predators sense the child's lack of family support and their susceptibility.⁶⁸

Induction. There are multiple ways that individuals become involved in trafficking situation. It may happen through friends, family members, buyers inducting them into commercial sex, or through traffickers disguised as boyfriends.⁶⁹ It can begin as a romantic relationship with a young woman where a trafficker is eventually able to take over the will of their victim. The trafficker then offers the girl better living alternatives than her family home, shelter, or foster care.

Lies. Methods to lure victims include offering fake employment opportunities, drug addiction, and promises of a better life. In addition, adolescents with low self-esteem may be at an increased risk of being recruited due to higher rates of social media use.⁷⁰ That is because young adults experiencing emotional instability were more strategic in their on-line presentation to seek assurance from others.⁷¹

Barriers to Leaving. Reasons why survivors won't leave their situation include emotional barriers, abuse, debt bondage, and male privilege.⁷² The techniques of control used by domestic abusers to ensure the submission of their wives or girlfriends are similar to the tactics that traffickers use to recruit and keep their victims trapped. These tactics of

⁶⁸ Rosenblatt, *Stolen*, 19.

⁶⁹ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 104.

⁶⁹ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 105.

⁷⁰ Litam, "Human Sex Trafficking in America," 49.

⁷¹ Litam, "Human Sex Trafficking in America," 50.

⁷² Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 106.

power and control include threats and intimidation as well as emotional, sexual, and physical violence.⁷³ Author Rachel Lloyd reflects on bonding issues in *Girls Like Us*:

“Why didn’t you just leave?” In the first few years after I left the life of being a victim of trafficking, I was asked that question frequently. Embedded in the question were unspoken accusations: how could you be so weak/stupid? Was it because you deserved/liked it? In the beginning, I would constantly ask myself the same question, the accusatory subtext included. In truth, I didn’t know why I stayed and I hated myself for doing so. Yet, as I began to work with strong, smart, brave girls who’d stayed with their abusers and who in spite of all the violence and exploitation continued to profess abject devotion - “But I love him” - I couldn’t see them as weak or stupid. Instead I started to see a pattern with the girls I met. They were already bruised and vulnerable from the adults (parents, grandparents, uncles, family friends) in their lives when they met the adult men who would seize on their vulnerability like sharks smelling blood in the water. The same tactics would be used over and over again - kindness, violence, kindness, more violence. I watched helplessly as girls were jerked back from every attempt at independence by some invisible bungee cord; one end attached to the men they “loved” and the other end wrapped tightly around their necks.⁷⁴

Reasons Why Victims Stay

Victims (especially adolescents) who become trafficked experience neurological effects from childhood physical, emotional, and sexual trauma that inhibits their abilities to make choices or escape their captors.⁷⁵ There is also the presence of constant fear that can create barriers to cognitive processing and decision-making, which explains why victims don’t run. Due to lack of self-efficiency, childhood victims are more likely to accept the situation of abuse.⁷⁶

⁷³ Farley, *Prostitution*, 21.

⁷⁴ Lloyd, *Girls Like Us*, 153.

⁷⁵ Litam, “Human Sex Trafficking in America,” 52.

⁷⁶ Litam, “Human Sex Trafficking in America,” 52.

Brainwashing. In order to keep their victims so they do not flee, traffickers brainwash them, watch them very closely, and keep them isolated.⁷⁷ Human trafficking victims endure psychological damage from being brainwashed and held captive. Behavioral problems can develop, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, which causes them to relive their victimization over and over again.⁷⁸

Traffickers control the victim's sense of self, often to the extent of completely controlling their identity. They will often change the names and appearances of the individuals they prostitute. This promotes the idea that they have created a new person out of the victim, whose role is specifically for prostitution.⁷⁹ This helps to prove the trafficker's ownership of his property. In *The Slave Across the Street*, the author explains:

Molesters, traffickers, and evil people are astute at what they do. They prey upon a person's weaknesses. They get into people's minds. Void of a moral or ethical compass, they bully, threaten, manipulate, and hurt their victims. They seek out the girl who needs love in her life and who is lonely, starved for attention, naïve, and trusting. When an older boyfriend showers her with presents and sweet talk, it seems too good to be true. And it is. The trap is set and sprung.⁸⁰

Fear Tactic. Captors make a practice of controlling their victims through fear and intimidation. This violence impacts 86% of victims of prostitution.⁸¹ Profit is the main reason that traffickers peddle their victims but being in power and presenting a powerful

⁷⁷ ShirleyKonneh, "An Exploration of Efforts To Combat Human Trafficking in a Small Community" (doctoral dissertation, Walden University, 2017): 43.

⁷⁸ Konneh, "An Exploration of Efforts," 5.

⁷⁹ Farley, *Prostitution*, 22.

⁸⁰ Flores, *The Slave Across the Street*, 190.

⁸¹ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 128.

image is also important to the trafficker.⁸² In many neighborhoods, traffickers are looked upon as symbols of success. Yet, they are criminals who recruit, coerce, and threaten victims into the world of prostitution.⁸³

In addition to fearing their captors, victims may also fear how society will view them, and therefore, are less likely to report any act of violence towards them.⁸⁴ There may be language barriers that keep them from escaping, making it nearly impossible for victims to cooperate with authorities and to share their story of abuse. If victims were kidnapped, their families were often threatened as well as the life of the victim.⁸⁵ Beatings, abuse, and repeated sex partners often lead to emotional disorders, health problems, substance abuse, and anxiety and depression.⁸⁶

Drug Dependence. Once traffic victims become involved in prostitution, they are often forced to travel far from their homes and become isolated from family and friends.⁸⁷ They then need a way to support themselves, which trafficking offers.

⁸² Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking*, 192.

⁸³ Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking*, 195.

⁸⁴ Litam, "Human Trafficking in America," 48.

⁸⁵ Litem, "Human Trafficking in America," 43.

⁸⁶ Shelley, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*, 63.

⁸⁷ Shelley, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*, 41.

Involvement in drugs may be an additional contributing factor to their barrier to be able to leave the situation.

Getting a victim hooked on drugs is a common tactic in the sex trade. It is another way traffickers gain cooperation and loyalty from the victim.⁸⁸ Once a victim becomes an addict, they will do anything to get the drugs they crave. The more money a victim brings in, the better drugs he/she will receive from the trafficker.⁸⁹

Trauma Bonding. The identification of victims with their abusers is known as the Stockholm Syndrome. Jaycee Dugard was a famous victim of kidnapping who was eventually rescued. She explained her relationship with her abuser in this way: “You are brainwashed; it’s as simple as that. I know people use that term a lot, but that’s what happens to you. It is like you are on autopilot, only someone else is controlling all the switches. They control every minute detail in your life.”⁹⁰

Trauma bonding is a survival mechanism that allows the victim to be able to endure torture during trafficking situations.⁹¹ It is an unnatural bond with one’s captor, but to the victim, it means survival. Trafficking survivors experience multiple layers of trauma. Yet, survivors often feel indebted to their captor for not killing them. Dissociative disorders are common, since hiding or forgetting one’s real self makes it possible to survive the horror of trafficking.⁹²

⁸⁸ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 129.

⁸⁹ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 129.

⁹⁰ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 127.

⁹¹ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 114.

⁹² Farley, *Prostitution*, 161.

Victim Identity Confusion. Victims are continuously used over and over again until the trafficker no longer wants them due to over-abuse or old age. Many survivors develop a stigmatized identity. This identity is developed through moral degradation and creates a mistrust in the survivor, which can lead to unstable relationships.⁹³ Due to the long-suffering that a victim endures, the victim may have a tendency to victimize other individuals because that is all they know. This is a way of enforcing the power that was stolen from them.⁹⁴

Limited Survivor Support. Support for the victim is often limited and controversial. There have been efforts by governments all around the world that target human trafficking, but not enough to contain the problem. It has become a worldwide epidemic with an average of 2.5 million people trafficked at any given time.⁹⁵

Limited research has been done on the duration of trafficking victims. But research done in the United States on mortality of prostitutes reveals high probabilities of early death.⁹⁶ Author Louise Shelley explains in *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* that:

Most human trafficking victims don't survive. By the time they reach their twenties, they are worthless to the human trafficking trade. They're either drug-addicted or they become recruiters themselves. Many die from disease, drug overdose, or murder. Sometimes they see that their only way out is through suicide. In many cases, once children are recruited, their families don't hear from them again.⁹⁷

⁹³ Farley, *Prostitution*, 6.

⁹⁴ Litam, "Human Trafficking In America," 48.

⁹⁵ Konneh, "An Exploration of Efforts, 7.

⁹⁶ Shelley, *Human Trafficking*, 73.

⁹⁷ Rosenblatt, *Stolen*, 15.

A statement from the International Organization of Migration explained that it is “possible to repair broken jaws and bones, but it is not possible to mend the often-irreparable psychological damage to the victim.”⁹⁸ Some research has shown that women who stopped engaging in trafficking had similar levels of mental health problems (40%) and drug addiction (73%) as those who remained in the sex industry.⁹⁹

The tragic reality is that escape and rescue are extremely rare for a person who is trafficked. A few age out, which means a victim may be strong enough to survive and traffickers abandon the victim in favor of grooming a new and younger person. Occasionally a victim becomes very ill or is tossed out as traffickers find a more beneficial initiate.¹⁰⁰

The World They Know. From working with sex trafficking victims as a licensed professional counselor, I have learned that victims will sometimes return to the trafficking world they came from because that is the world they know or are familiar with. Helping victims understand that they are “victims” are often a focus area. Because of prior abuse, many of these individuals don’t realize they are objects of mistreatment and will instead put the blame on themselves for allowing the trafficking scenario to exist. Because of past experiences, they may consider the situation they are in as *predictable* or *expected* because of their feelings of worthlessness and of having no value in their own eyes. In *Fallen*, the author shares a personal testimony about her introduction into sex trafficking:

Kimmy introduced me to the life of prostitution, but she didn’t know what she was getting herself, or me, into. She looked at being a high-class call girl from the

⁹⁸ Shelly, *Human Trafficking*, 72.

⁹⁹ Shelly, *Human Trafficking*, 72.

¹⁰⁰ Theresa Flores and Peggy Sue Wells, *Slavery In the Land of the Free* (Boise: Ampelton Publishing, 2016): 87-88.

perspective of what she was gaining. Her boyfriend showered her with diamonds. He draped her in a designer wardrobe. He bought her a family car. So what if she turned a few tricks at night? During the day she was sipping a cocktail under sweeping palm trees and enjoying the perks of making insane money, sometimes even just for performing the simple act of taking off her clothes. (Kimmie never considered her boyfriend a trafficker, because she believed he was completely in love with her.)¹⁰¹

The Trafficker

Profile of a Trafficker

Most traffickers do not all wear flashy clothes and or drive a Cadillac. Instead, they look just like everyone else and fit into society in everyday ways. Traffickers are often hiding in plain sight. They have jobs, families, friends, and often hold positions of authority within their community. While the majority of traffickers, predators, and pedophiles are male, many recruiters are also women. They may be mothers, aunts, and even grandmothers.¹⁰²

Traffickers are often quite intelligent and very cunning. Many traffickers work together and form intricate networks to recruit. They are committed to finding multiple girls to traffic. Much of the alleged glamour of “pimping” comes from the macho idea of having multiple women.¹⁰³ Less than 3% of those trafficked in the United States were victims of kidnapping. Instead, most victims know their trafficker. Many are family or family friends.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Annie Lobert, *Fallen: Out of the Sex Industry and Into the Arms of the Savior* (Franklin: Worthy Books, 2015), 26.

¹⁰² Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 78.

¹⁰³ Lloyd, *Girls Like Us*, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 80.

Traffickers are often politically connected and well-financed. Because of this, voices of former trafficked victims are often silenced by the power and control of the trafficker.¹⁰⁵ Because prostitution and trafficking are so horrific, it is often not talked about or addressed. People feel uncomfortable, powerless, guilty, and re-traumatized by hearing about prostitution, so it is often silenced, giving the trafficker even more control and power.

Aspects of the Trafficker

Traffickers excel at three things: manipulation, power, and control.¹⁰⁶ They are knowledgeable about the necessary brain-washing techniques to secure their victims and are proud of being able to take ownership over others. Ironically, most every human trafficking victim has given consent to go with the trafficker because of the lies and manipulation that the trafficker is so skilled at utilizing.¹⁰⁷

Why would a girl go along with her abuser? Professionals in the field of child abuse, domestic violence, and commercial sexual exploitation label the process as seasoning, grooming and conditioning.¹⁰⁸ Abusers use threats, isolation, and physical torture to dominate their victims.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Farley, *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress*, xix.

¹⁰⁶ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 147.

¹⁰⁷ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 148.

¹⁰⁸ Flores and Wells, *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, 72.

¹⁰⁹ Flores and Wells, *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, 72.

Traffickers often exhibit common characteristics. They are frequently older than female companions, vague about their profession, encourage victims to engage in illegal activities for the benefit of the trafficker, and promise the world (things too good to be true) to their victims.¹¹⁰ Traffickers also have a unique way of making victims feel they are responsible for the trafficker's financial stability.¹¹¹

Trafficker Victims. Traffickers themselves frequently come from backgrounds of victimization. Studies on traffickers find a history of troubled home life as children, including sexual abuse, child abuse, and substance use by the parents.¹¹² This can often be difficult to accept, though, as people want to look at traffickers as “evil.” But it is often a tortured home life or negative social environment that “creates” a trafficker.

The majority of traffickers were victims themselves of sexual assault at an average age of 9.5 years old.¹¹³ This is an important analysis, because to alter human trafficking, the social conditions that create traffickers must be confronted.

Trafficking Techniques

Sex traffickers are often hiding in open view. They can hold positions of authority in communities and can be neighbors, friends, or even family members. While the majority of traffickers are men, it is also true that half of their recruiters are women and

¹¹⁰ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 177.

¹¹¹ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 177.

¹¹² Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 123.

¹¹³ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 124.

girls.¹¹⁴ Traffickers are generally very intelligent, as they know how to plot a course through the “deep web,” which includes a sophisticated internet system. Traffickers can often be well connected in communities, which helps them to create an expansive network of recruiters.

Traffickers use their skills to control a victim’s sense of self, often completely controlling her identity. This strengthens the idea that they not only own the woman but have actually created a new individual specially for the purpose of prostitution.¹¹⁵ Traffickers break women down physically, emotionally, and psychologically to turn the victim into property. This can involve beating, raping, starving, and telling her she is good for nothing but sex.¹¹⁶ This solidifies the traffickers’ ownership.

Grooming Process. A trafficker will initially establish a relationship with the victim before he turns her into a prostitute. He may become her boyfriend and even promise her marriage. It is all about trust. If the woman becomes dependent upon the trafficker, escape becomes difficult and dangerous.¹¹⁷ Often, the victim personally knows the trafficker. A study conducted by Arizona State University reflected that only 7.8% of

¹¹⁴ Joy, *Human Trafficking* 101, 78.

¹¹⁵ Farley, *Prostitution*, 22.

¹¹⁶ Farley, *Prostitution*, 22.

¹¹⁷ Farley, *Prostitution*, 23.

victims who were trafficked were exploited by complete strangers.¹¹⁸ In *Fallen*, the author reflects her personal story:

By the time I was twelve years old, the chaos and pain from my childhood were too much. I couldn't take it anymore. I was sure there had to be something better outside the walls of my home. Suddenly, I was alone. I had no food and no place to sleep. But it wasn't long before I met the nicest guy. The man's name was Michael. He wore a heavy jacket and a blue stocking cap and spoke in a soft voice. "Sheila, you don't seem like the other girls I see on the street," he said. "You're pretty and seem really smart. How did you end up out here?" Michael took me to a fancy townhouse. Soon after, the front door opened, and three men staggered in. They pulled off my clothes and then raped me repeatedly.' After they left, I got the courage to get my clothes and start moving. I had to get out of there, get back to the streets. But when I tried to open the door, nothing happened. I realized it was locked from the other side. I was trapped.¹¹⁹

Stages of Grooming. The grooming stages include ensnaring, creating dependence, taking control and total dominance.¹²⁰ Ensnaring can be as simple as showing attention to a potential victim, buying gifts, or entering into a physical relationship. The focus of building dependence is often a means of isolation. Traffickers strive to separate victims from family and friends to grow their dependence on the traffickers themselves. The control stage is the stage where the traffickers shift from being caring and supportive to possessive and controlling. This can happen through use of threats, violence, or drugs to control the victim. The final stage is dominance, where

¹¹⁸ Joy, *Human Trafficking* 101, 80.

¹¹⁹ Mary Frances Bowley, *The White Umbrella: Walking with Survivors in Sex Trafficking* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012): 22-23.

¹²⁰ Litam, "Human Sex Trafficking in America," 47.

the trafficker basically “owns” his victim. Once the victim becomes completely dependent, the trafficker begins “selling” the victim to others for substantial profit.¹²¹

Bonding Process. The grooming process refers to the increase of power used by traffickers to control their victims. This is often referred to as a “trauma bond.” Trauma bonding is a form of power in which traffickers create a sense of fear as well as gratitude for being allowed to live.¹²² This survival method is similar to the Stockholm Syndrome, which is a well-documented phenomenon where captive victims develop a psychological devotion to their captor.¹²³ This survival mechanism allow victims to endure the torture common in trafficking situations. In the book *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress*, the author explains:

Unless human behavior under conditions of captivity is understood, the emotional bond between those prostituted and the traffickers is difficult to comprehend. The terror created in the prostituted woman by the trafficker causes a sense of helplessness and dependence. This emotional bonding to an abuse under conditions of captivity has been described as the Stockholm Syndrome. Attitudes and behaviors which are part of this syndrome include: 1) intense gratefulness for small favors when the captor holds life and death power over the captor; 2) denial of the extent of violence and harm which the captor has inflicted or is obviously capable of inflicting; 3) hyper vigilance with respect to the pimp’s needs and identification with the pimp’s perspective on the world (an example of this was Patty Hearst’s identification with her captor’s ideology); 4) perception of those trying to assist in escape as enemies and perception of captors as friends; 5) extreme difficulty leaving one’s captor, even after physical release has occurred. Paradoxically, women in prostitution may feel that they owe their lives to their trafficker.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Litam, “Human Sex Trafficking in America,” 48.

¹²² Litam, “Human Sex Trafficking in America,” 47.

¹²³ Joy, *Trafficking 101*, 114.

¹²⁴ Farley, *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress*, 23.

Cause and Demand. Human trafficking exists because of the demand of the buyers. There are three parts that drive demand. They include the men who purchase the sexual favors, the traffickers who provide the victims, and the culture that allows sexual exploitation to happen. Other elements that open the door to human trafficking include gender inequalities, easy access for pornography, enhanced globalization, lack of accountability for traffickers (suppliers) and johns (buyers), and lack of services for victims once they are rescued.¹²⁵

Trafficking Factors

Human trafficking is fueled by many different factors. The factors contributing towards trafficking include supply, demand, and profitability.¹²⁶

- Supply - trafficking victims fulfill the supply chain for the consumer
- Demand - consumers are motivated by the demand for prostitution
- Profitability - traffickers reap the profits of the exchange

Supply. Traffickers are the users and johns are the takers. Traffickers recognize that a great number of consumers will pay a substantial amount of money to satisfy their displaced desires. Together, users and takers victimize on the average of two children every minute globally.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 60.

¹²⁶ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 16.

¹²⁷ Flores, *Slavery in the Land*, 68.

Demand. Traffickers are motivated by profits and users (johns) are motivated by desire for prostitution. It is an industry fueled by money and lust. Without demand, trafficking would not exist. About 99% of buyers are male and most are married with children.¹²⁸ Consumers are usually educated and have an average age of 42.5 years old.¹²⁹ About 10-20% of men in the United States have purchased sex in their lifetime.¹³⁰

Profitability. Sex traffickers are also usually involved in other types of criminal activity, such as drugs, fraud, gambling, and guns. It is more lucrative than most other crimes and less risky.¹³¹ Sex trafficking yields a 70% profit for the trafficker.¹³² Prosecution for sex trafficking is convoluted and often difficult to prove, so perpetrators are often hidden faces in a crowd.

Pornography. Human trafficking is an economic relationship. Traffickers are motivated mostly by the substantial profit of trafficking.¹³³ They supply the link between supply and demand. The topic of demand is a cornerstone of abolitionism - if there were no demand for sexual commerce, then trafficking wouldn't exist.¹³⁴ Pornography increases this need. Pornography often creates demand for women and children to be supplied for

¹²⁸ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 152.

¹²⁹ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 152.

¹³⁰ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 16.

¹³¹ Jeffrey Goltz et al., *Human Trafficking: A Systemwide Public Safety and Community Approach* (St. Paul: West Academic Publishing, 2017), 19.

¹³² Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 16.

¹³³ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 58.

¹³⁴ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 43.

sexual use in human trafficking. It stimulates demand for buying victims for sexual objects in the same way it stimulates the viewer to act out on other victims.¹³⁵

Internet Influence. The true extent to which men's experiences and behaviors are affected by the internet contributes to the escalation of exploitation and abuse of their victims.¹³⁶ Technological innovations and unregulated use of the internet have created a global medium for trafficking. As global communication forums have become more prevalent, so has the crime of trafficking increased.

Approximately 70% of individuals sold into sex trafficking are sold through online platforms, such as Craigslist or Facebook.¹³⁷ Traffickers who once recruited in person are now turning to the internet for access to their potential victims. Many children on social media have no idea how to identify a predator and let their feelings take control. Approximately, 83-95% of all teens in the United States have a Facebook account, which opens the door to predator victimization.¹³⁸

What Traffickers Seek

There are many ways that individuals become involved in trafficking, including through family, friends, buyers, and traffickers. Traffickers are always on the lookout for victims to recruit. Recruiting can take place at detention centers, homeless shelters,

¹³⁵ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 44.

¹³⁶ Farley, *Prostitution*, 125.

¹³⁷ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 67.

¹³⁸ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 69.

schools, parks, social media, streets, or even churches.¹³⁹ Traffickers are looking for vulnerable individuals and these victims often personally know their trafficker. In *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, the author Theresa Flores shares a testimony of a victim:

As a little girl, Charlotte idolized her older brother. But he began doing drugs and Charlotte hid in her room when strange men came for parties at their house when her mom was away. Eventually her brother sold Charlotte to the men who came to the house to pay for his drug habit. Because he threatened Charlotte not to tell anyone, her mother had no idea what was happening to her daughter while she was at work.¹⁴⁰

Victim Weaknesses. Traffickers know the types of human behaviors that display vulnerabilities. They look for individuals with low self-esteem, lack of parental protection, and emotional neediness.¹⁴¹ These features can be uncovered online or in person. It takes only eight minutes for a trafficker to know if a person is a likely victim.¹⁴² The author reflects on her vulnerability in *Stolen*:

As children, we were needy, insecure, anxious, lonely, and vulnerable. Without the maturity to make adult decisions, we didn't always know what was right or wrong. Instead, we felt something was wrong with us and that we were inferior to other children.¹⁴³

Dependence on Trafficker. Once victims are caught in the trafficking loop, it is difficult for them to leave. This can be because of emotional barriers, stigmatization,

¹³⁹ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 104.

¹⁴⁰ Theresa Flores, *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, 87.

¹⁴¹ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 81.

¹⁴² Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 81.

¹⁴³ Rosenblatt, *Stolen*, 14.

debt, threats of abuse, and gaps in services available for trafficking survivors.¹⁴⁴ They often have nowhere to go. They have been dependent upon the trafficker for shelter, food, and housing. Unavailability of community support services creates a barrier, including lack of safe shelter and other resources. Finding housing, employment, education, substance abuse rehabilitation and access to trauma-informed care are all barriers for the victim.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 108.

¹⁴⁵ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 108.

SECTION 2:

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

Introduction

When the level of awareness becomes so high that entire communities stand together against trafficking, that is the beginning of being slave-proofed. At that point, safety and services are provided to help those who have been trafficked and to prevent others from being trafficked. Law enforcement and prosecutors successfully prosecute traffickers to the full extent of the law. When these things happen, it makes that place undesirable for traffickers, so they leave the region to go where trafficking is more profitable. I like to say, at that point, those communities have made it hard to be a trafficker. In everything I do, I want to make it hard to be a trafficker!¹⁴⁶

Programs In Place

There are many effective programs for helping sex trafficking individuals find their way towards healing after they are “discovered.” But the discovery must take place before the intense counseling process can begin. And helping the Christian community to become more aware of the presence of trafficking victims is an important first step towards this healing process. By reporting a suspected trafficking situation to authorities, it allows for law enforcement to take over to rescue the victim and prosecute the perpetrator.

As a Licensed Professional Counselor, I have the honor of helping trafficking victims to heal from their pain through counseling principles. So many of these individuals have lost their identity along the journey of being a sex trafficking victim, so I

¹⁴⁶ Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America*, 204-205.

help them find empowerment through their experiences. When counseling victims of trafficking, it requires the utilization of the many tools and techniques taught in my extensive counseling education.

People who have not been trained in counseling cannot provide the answers to the questions that trafficking individuals need answers to. This is why I will not be going into the area of counseling avenues in this dissertation and, instead, I will focus on helping create a skill set in the areas of awareness and recognition of victims.

Law Enforcement

Investigation of sex trafficking on the federal level is typically conducted by the FBI, but at times federal investigators will collaborate with local law enforcement as well.¹⁴⁷ However, although cases are prosecuted at the federal level, most are initially identified at the local level. The concern is that there are nearly eighteen-thousand law enforcement agencies in the US, creating a situation of confusion due to lack of uniformity in education, training and protocols.¹⁴⁸ This leads to disparity in how trafficking is addressed.

Many minors of sex trafficking are often arrested for prostitution rather than rescued. Many states now have “safe harbor” laws in place, which aim to significantly reduce or eliminate the criminal responsibility of children from prostitution and instead direct child victims to services through the child welfare system.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking*, 192.

¹⁴⁸ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking*, 192.

¹⁴⁹ Kotria and Wommack, “Sex Trafficking Of Minors in the U.S.,” 10.

Multiple studies show that law enforcement, from a local to federal level, is primarily reactive rather than proactive in investigating sex trafficking. Proactive identification involves law enforcement seeking out sex trafficking cases while reactive identification involves reaction to already-identified cases.¹⁵⁰ Police do not have the time nor the resources to actively seek victims and/or perpetrators. That is why awareness by citizens is so crucial in the fight against human trafficking. Author Nita Belles explores:

The prevalence of sex trafficking, including forced prostitution, is on the rise in part because traffickers have discovered that unlike drugs or weapons, people can be sold over and over again. A criminal who sells illegal drugs or weapons runs a higher risk of arrest and must always be putting out more cash to replenish their supply. In selling a human being, a trafficker brutally sells the person over and over.¹⁵¹

National Human Trafficking Help Line

The Human Trafficking Help Line is a crucial piece of the puzzle to connect trafficking victims with resources to help them find their way out of the clutches of the trafficking world. This is a national, anti-trafficking hotline with resources available to support victims. The hotline is active 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, 365 days a year. Callers can call the hotline and reach a trained professional who can reach out to the appropriate resources for action and support. This hotline is employed with trained individuals who are also multi-lingual and available to support at a moment's notice. The

¹⁵⁰ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking*, 192.

¹⁵¹ Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America*, 120.

Hotline also maintains one of the most extensive data sets on the issue of human trafficking in the United States.¹⁵²

There is a great need for improved services for sex trafficking victims, especially minors. It often takes years of victim-focused services for these victims to be able to recover to the point of functioning again in society. The current system has not been able to meet the needs of the victims. Yet, new services through various agencies are now being created. Organizations such as Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women and Freedom Network USA have established more comprehensive services for victims. Some of these services include safe housing, meeting victim needs, including access to health care and mental health care as well as education and training programs.¹⁵³ In addition, legal assistance and translator services may also be available to help these individuals navigate their way through the legal system.

Because youth are at the highest risk of falling into the hands of traffickers, prevention education must begin earlier than the average age of entry into sex human trafficking, which is 13 years of age.¹⁵⁴ Education is necessary to help both youth and adults to understand the realities of trafficking, including how to avoid exploitation and how traffickers recruit victims. Yet, there is a lack of education available to help communities understand the prevalence of trafficking within their own backyard. Theresa Flores in *The Slave Across the Street* explains how denial is a factor:

¹⁵² <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/states>.

¹⁵³ Kotria, "Sex Trafficking of Minors," 9.

¹⁵⁴ Kotria, "Sex Trafficking of Minors," 10.

Denial is the balm. People don't want to believe this happens anywhere, let alone in our communities. They may have heard of trafficking in other parts of the world. Or perhaps within the U.S., but the girls who have been tricked and brought here from other countries like Russia and Mexico. People don't want to admit there is even a slim possibility that young American girls are forced into prostitution or exploited. Especially not girls from the suburbs. So, we endure alone.¹⁵⁵

Counseling/ Health Care Programs

For counselors, building strong rapport with a counseling victim who has been recruited off the street or even court mandated (after being 'found') is crucial. Trafficking victims naturally do not trust anyone outside their trafficking circle because of the deception used by traffickers during the grooming process. Counselors must display empathy, unconditional acceptance of the person, and authenticity.

Once a strong relationship has been established, counselors can begin utilizing various counseling tools, including psycho-education, group counseling, and medication management.¹⁵⁶ In addition, there must be treatment of substance abuse issues and reintegration into job skills training and education.

Yet, not all "found" victims become success stories in the world of trafficking. As a Licensed Professional Counselor, I have often felt feelings of frustration and helplessness when working with trafficking victims because victims often do not want to leave their traffickers. It is important to remember that many victims have experienced neurological effects from childhood emotional, physical, and sexual trauma that interferes with their ability to make rational decisions or to escape their trafficking situation. The

¹⁵⁵ Flores, *The Slave Across the Street*, 168.

¹⁵⁶ Litam, "Human Sex Trafficking," 53.

presence of ceaseless fear causes barriers to cognitive processing and decision-making, which is often why victims don't try to escape their traffickers, even when there is an opportunity to do so.¹⁵⁷ In *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, the author states:

All victims, regardless of their age when the victimization began, how long it endured, or how violent it was, suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Some are diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, attachment disorder, or bipolar. Once free, their bodies can heal, but their minds are broken. This spirit is lost and wounded.¹⁵⁸

I am not addressing the scenario of working directly with the victims in this dissertation, as there is a required skill set necessary to work with trafficking victims. There are specific tools and techniques that can be utilized by trained professionals to address the mental health issues that trafficking creates.

It is crucial to provide trauma-informed, victim-centered care through specialized training and education for trafficking victims. It is important that victims receive trauma-informed care that is rooted in empathy, non-judgment, patience, and a patient-first perspective. The rationale of the Medical Safe Haven model in family medicine stresses that health providers must be understanding and responsive to the impact of the trauma of trafficking, including the physical, psychological, and emotional needs of the patient.¹⁵⁹ The program also stresses the creation of opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

¹⁵⁷ Litam, "Human Sex Trafficking," 52.

¹⁵⁸ Flores, *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, 149.

¹⁵⁹ Chambers, "Caring for Human Trafficking Victims," 349.

A Community Working Together

Another important aspect of Medical Safe Haven is the connection and cooperation of local agencies and community organizations that can offer additional resources, support, and care for victims of trafficking.¹⁶⁰ By bringing community organizations together, it can strengthen the response to trauma-based needs of victims of trafficking. The goal is not to recreate the wheel; it is instead to work together to create a barrier against the atrocities of trafficking.

We CAN make a difference in the fight against human trafficking but education is necessary to know what to look for. Communities benefit when professionals (teachers, coaches, law enforcement, medical and counseling) work together. Ignoring the problem or being too cowardly to get involved only validates to the victim that they are worthless, guilty, no value, and the one at fault.¹⁶¹ Author Theresa Flores shares a reflection of her pain in *Slavery in the Land of the Free*:

I dreamed, wished, and prayed for a person to help me. For God to send someone to rescue me. For me, that person never showed up. Not the guidance counselor who failed to ask why my grades were failing; not the principal who didn't ask why I had skipped class; not the security guard in the school hallway who ignored the physical abuse I endured; not the teachers who turned their back when I was being harassed; not the cop who took me home after being kidnapped, drugged, and left for dead; not my boyfriend who knew something was amiss; not my fellow students who knew I was being bullied; not the neighbor who saw me run through his backyard in my pajamas and barefoot at midnight. No one took the hard path of awareness.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Chambers, "Caring for Human Trafficking Victims," 349.

¹⁶¹ Flores, *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, 113.

¹⁶² Flores, *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, 188.

Challenges

One challenge lies in changing attitudes, so that someone who pimps girls is seen as the slave master rather than someone who is respected in our communities.¹⁶³ Pimps are at the top of the food chain in the trafficking world. A pimp explained that “you control your girl with your mind and get money without doing anything. You put them at risk but there is no risk for you.”¹⁶⁴ The human cost to the victim is of little consideration to the trafficker.

Care for the victim should be the ultimate focal point for any faith-focused individual or organization. Most victims have consented to go with their trafficker because of lies and coercion. Because of this, they carry a heavy weight of guilt and shame. Helping victims to understand they are ‘a victim’ cannot take place without first creating awareness of the situation and reaching out to skilled professionals to take over and by helping this hurting individual to become a survivor.

The Polaris Project is leading a data-driven social justice movement to fight sex trafficking and the massive scale of the problem. They founded the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline, which has assisted thousands of victims and survivors.¹⁶⁵ I believe that their leadership in the fight against trafficking is unparalleled. Their deep experience in the field of trafficking has provided valuable insights to creating awareness and bringing the fight against human trafficking to the forefront.

¹⁶³ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 148.

¹⁶⁴ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 148.

¹⁶⁵ <http://polarisproject.org>.

The Need for Training Programs

Because there is limited training on identification of trafficking victims as well as insufficient resources to intercede, it is important to train people how to recognize trafficking victims. The purpose of this paper is to help the faith-based community become more aware of the crime of trafficking to help with the goal of breaking the chains that bind the victims.

Sex trafficking is often unreported, misreported, or simply not identified because of the many barriers and challenges to identifying and reporting the crime.¹⁶⁶ Traffickers take great precautions to assure non-detection through hidden measures and hidden community connections. Victims may also not want to report their victimization because of fear or mental dissociation. Because of these factors, under-reporting and under-detection of the crime is increasing in our communities.

It is the responsibility of faith-focused individuals to learn more about human trafficking and to report circumstances of suspected trafficking to the proper authorities. Yet, there must be training, equipping, and empowering of individuals of faith to clarify what to look for and how to recognize a trafficking scenario to be able to report it, so that the chains of slavery can be broken.

¹⁶⁶ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 13.

SECTION 3:

A NEW APPROACH TO THE BATTLE

Introduction

I'm not sure why Danielle's story particularly got to me that night. After all, this is what I do. I've spent the last thirteen years of my life working with girls just like Danielle, girls who have been bought and sold. I don't cry after every girl I meet, nor do I drink several glasses of wine after every tough story. Over the years, I've learned to develop some distance, a basic ability to hear, to absorb varying levels of horrific detail without taking it all home with me every night. As any cop, emergency worker, or first-responder will tell you, sometimes something unexpectedly sneaks in, getting through the wall that you've so carefully constructed in order to stay sane. Perhaps what got to me was the ease with which men had been able to buy Danielle, right there on their laptops. No lurking about in the streets, no curb-crawling in shady areas. They bought sex online of a child like they were paying a bill, ordering a pair of shoes, booking a vacation. Perhaps it was the insidious nature of her recruitment, the fact that she never stood a chance. A foster care kid, bounced from place to place, with two "older" sisters who had also been trafficked. Or was it the cheap necklace that she so lovingly fondled and the realization of how easy it had been for this adult man to lure her, to seduce her, to become her "boyfriend." Maybe it was the fact that just a month before I had met her, the New York State Senate had refused to pass a bill that would have created services and support for girls just like her, who were normally treated as criminals, not victims. Perhaps what cracked my armor that night was her age. Even though I frequently recited the statistic that the estimated median age of entry into the commercial sex industry was between twelve and fourteen years old and had worked with lots of very young girls over the years, there was something about her eleven-year-old puppy fat, her love of roller coaster rides, that shook me. Ultimately, it was all of it. Meeting Danielle that night was a harsh reminder of how much work there was still to do.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Rachelle Lloyd, *Girls Like Us*, 12.

Addressing the Issue

Helping faith-based entities find where God is at work and then joining Him there is the core of Christianity. Christ embraced friendship with women of questionable repute during the days of His journey on earth, including the woman at the well (John 4:4-42) and the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50). So, it needs to be understood that the work of addressing the problems of human trafficking (even with the sexual connotations attached) is Jesus' work on earth. The Scriptures testify that if we want to find where God is at work, we must identify those who are in need and be ready to help them (Romans 12:13). We are God's hands and feet to make a difference for hurting people.

Recognizing the trafficking victim is the key to finding a solution to the problem. Potential victims give off warning signs, which make them more vulnerable to becoming sufferers of abuse and torture. Understanding the basics of what traffickers are looking for is one of the first steps towards uncovering the invisible victims of trafficking.

It is also important to learn about the trafficker: their background, motive, and driving force that makes them a predator and a criminal. Traffickers can hide as wolves in sheep's clothing. So, by learning about perpetrators, it offers additional insight into the world of trafficking and what to be aware of with regards to traffickers and their motives.

Changes are Necessary

For faith-focused individuals to be able to help to change the direction of human sex trafficking, leaders of faith are in a position to encourage these three steps:

1. **Engage** their people to step up to the challenge of embracing the fight against trafficking
2. **Equip** their followers with the skills of awareness of potential victims of trafficking
3. **Empower** the Christian community to take the necessary steps to contact authorities with their suspicions

Hidden Problem

Since trafficking victims are often reluctant to identify themselves, rarely do victims come forward for help. Victims are often difficult to find and to reach. Many trafficking victims are taught to fear law enforcement; often because of past negative experiences they have either witnessed or experienced themselves.¹⁶⁸ Also, trafficking victims fear the retribution by their traffickers. Awareness is the key to uncovering these individuals if a trafficking situation is suspected. But most people don't know how to spot a trafficking victim or whom to report a suspected trafficking situation to.

Many faith-based organizations have expressed that they have not participated in the fight against human trafficking because the scope of the problem is so big. There are limited resources available to help them understand the concepts of human trafficking and how to become aware of victims and the guidance for direction after a victim has been identified. Victims are often illusive, and the signs of trafficking are frequently well-hidden by organized crime circuits.

The Christian faith directs its followers to seek out and help those who are less fortunate and who are hurting. Hebrews 13:16 states: "And do not forget to do good and

¹⁶⁸ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking*, 241.

share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Sharing means giving a part of ourselves to become a blessing for someone else in their struggles. As a Christian, life sometimes means getting “muddy” and reaching outside our comfort zone to help someone in need. It means reaching out of our church doors and into the streets where hurting individuals live. This is what becoming a disciple for Christ is all about. The definition of a disciple is someone who represents the presence of Christ through a ministry of serving others by bringing NEW LIFE into the secular world.

Creating Awareness

The problem is that we, as a community, cannot help the trafficking victim unless we understand and become aware of who the victims are. Learning to identify the victim is the first step towards helping the trafficked individual become a survivor. Sexual human trafficking is a camouflaged crime. It is difficult to identify victims, as they are often kept behind closed doors by their captor.

Matthew 5:16 explores: “In the same way [as Christ], let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.”¹⁶⁹ By helping the faith community embrace the fight to protect the innocent victims by equipping and empowering them with the knowledge needed to make a difference, the light can shine through them to help in the fight against human trafficking. In the book, *In our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, author Nita Belles shares her passion:

Nothing is impossible for you. That precious promise, one I cling to daily as I pray and do my part to help end human trafficking for good. I am well aware of the many obstacles we will face in this quest. But I also know that my God

transcends human possibility, and as incredibly huge and horrible and unjust as global human trafficking and slavery are, God is bigger...and infinitely good and just. That, friends, is how I know that this mountain will one day be moved.¹⁷⁰

Reflection from a Suspected Trafficking Scenario

In my practice as a Licensed Professional Counselor, I experienced a suspected trafficking situation that I was able to document and report. The situation was a man, aged 38, who brought in a young lady of 18 years of age, whom he wanted counseling for due to what he suggested was possible depression. There were many red flags as they came into the counseling room and both requested to stay together. What I first noticed was that the young woman made no direct eye contact and appeared diminutive in nature and introverted. Her gentleman “friend” explained that she was shy, and he proceeded to speak for her as the session continued.

With each question presented, the girl would look at the man to speak for her and not make direct eye contact with me. As the conversation continued, I noticed the man holding the girl’s hand throughout and not allowing her to speak. I also noted that when she tried to answer, a slight indistinguishable squeeze was applied to her hand. I knew I had to somehow get them separated to have a moment alone with the girl.

I was able to motion to our office manager and slip her a note, asking her to request a signature from the man, which gave me a fraction of a moment to ask the girl if she was in danger. There was no positive affirmation from her but there were cues such as a vacant look in her eyes, the inability to answer my direct question, and the barely

¹⁷⁰ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 160.

visible cut marks on her arms as she slid up her sleeve. Before the couple could reach the door, I immediately reported my suspicions (as a mandatory reporter) to the Human Trafficking hotline and provided the necessary information. Because of the compassion and urgency I recognized after placing the call, I feel confident that there was an effective follow-up and that the girl is now in safe hands and out of the chains of bondage that trafficking holds.

Helping Victims Become Survivors

For a long time, it seemed survivors were invisible. They were hidden where people couldn't see them and had no voice.¹⁷¹ The laws regarding human trafficking are complex, statistics are frightening, and the battle to fight trafficking is extensive. The United States Department of State describes prevention efforts as including education and awareness, targeted outreach to vulnerable populations, and legislation to address known problem areas.¹⁷²

Organizations and individuals should have one core vision: deliverance of victims.¹⁷³ The consequences of trafficking for the victims are devastating. Trafficked children are deprived of obtaining an education at a crucial age and suffer psychological scars. Trafficked women are often deprived of the opportunity for marriage and children. Families are traumatized and experience profound loss.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 247.

¹⁷² Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 75.

¹⁷³ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 247.

¹⁷⁴ Shelly, *Human Trafficking*, 61.

Locations for Potential Victims

Victims are all around us. The top sex trafficking industries include prostitution in hotels or the street, brothels, and escort services.¹⁷⁵ Most prevalent child trafficking industries are prostitution, peddling rings, pornography, escort service, traveling sales crew, and the restaurant/food industry.¹⁷⁶ Being aware of the surroundings and attune to warning signs will help to create awareness and recognition.

Potential victims can often be found in low-income neighborhoods, schools, shopping malls, and even churches. A life of vulnerability opens the door to a potential trafficking scenario. Individuals who have been exposed to childhood trauma, neglect, homelessness, abuse, or poverty are targets for traffickers, so often lower income or at-risk areas in our communities are key locations for trafficking situations.

Destruction of Lives

The magnitude of destruction that trafficking brings with it for the victim is immeasurable. Victims carry the pain and stigma with them throughout their lives. Healing can come only through recognizing that they were “victims” and that the circumstances were not their fault. Helping victims get to this point of acceptance is a long process of embracing this truth. In *A Healing Awakened*, author Jennifer Castle reflects on the destruction that human sex trafficking brings to the victim:

¹⁷⁵ Konneh, “An Exploration of Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking,” 3.

¹⁷⁶ Konneh, “An Exploration of Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking,” 3.

I grew up broken. I always felt disqualified in life, forever striving for perfection just to prove to the world I was ok. I was always misunderstood, labeled a rebellious, strong-willed child, a misfit everywhere I went, trusting of no one. Nobody knew I was fighting demons inside my own head. I turned 50 years old and I realized I had been trafficked all those years ago, up in the treehouse. And then it hit me, the magnitude of destruction and the winding trail of abuses that followed...how it affected every unwitting primal choice I had made in my early adult years.¹⁷⁷

Victim Warning Signs

There are warning signs that indicate that an individual may possibly be a victim of human trafficking. These signs may include:

- Signs of abuse such as bruises, cuts, or burn marks
- Unexplained absences from work or school
- Less appropriate dress or sexual behaviors
- Withdrawn, depressed or anxious
- Brags about making money or displays expensive clothes or jewelry¹⁷⁸
- Often there is a controlling figure nearby that is calling the shots

Invisible Chains

Commonly, traffickers will build a relationship with the victim in efforts to understand their dreams and create emotional attachment. They will then isolate the

¹⁷⁷ Castle, *A Healing Awakened*, 14.

¹⁷⁸ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 178.

victim from family and friends followed by manipulation and use of force.¹⁷⁹ Victims become the trafficker's property and it is made clear that he is in control.

Trafficking victims are not free to leave or come and go as they wish. They are usually unpaid or paid through tips. They are usually recruited through false promises and can work excessively long hours late into the night. They are often fearful, avoid eye contact, paranoid, and anxious around police or people of authority.¹⁸⁰

Physical and Mental Signs. Trafficking victims may also show physical signs of abuse or neglect. They may be malnourished and show signs of poor hygiene. Victims often may have signs of unexplained bruising, scars or burn marks. Marks around their wrists, ankles, and neck could suggest that the victim has been restrained or controlled through physical force.¹⁸¹ They may also exhibit tattoos associated with sex trafficking and wear inappropriate or ill-fitting clothing.

Trafficking victims also may show psychological signs of abuse. They often are confused about where they are at and display a lost sense of time. Their stories are inconsistent, and they may be unable to clarify where they live or what their address is.¹⁸² They may appear anxious or present timid behavior. They also often shut down attempts at conversation or make eye contact.

¹⁷⁹ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 175.

¹⁸⁰ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 162.

¹⁸¹ Chambers, "Caring for Human Trafficking Victims," 346.

¹⁸² Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 163.

Substance Abuse and Intimidation. Signs of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol can also be a signal of trafficking victims. Someone who has been drugged may lack coordination, have limited balance, or may have a difficult time keeping their head up and eyes open. There may be signs of needle marks and dilated pupils.

Victims may reflect heightened fear because of a controlling presence nearby. Traffickers usually stay close by and create an anxious presence for their victim. The trafficker may also portray himself as an uncle, boyfriend, or a father figure to distract questions about their relationship.

What To Do If Trafficking is Suspected

Resist the urge to get involved in the situation or to interfere with a potential trafficking scenario. Often, our desire is to help the victim on the spot, but by doing so, you are putting your own safety at risk. Do not approach an individual since the trafficker may be nearby or watching. It can be frightening to witness a potential trafficking situation but remember to remain calm and avoid drawing attention to yourself.

Approach with Care

If the potential victim is alone and you feel it is safe to do so, start by asking the victim some pertinent questions to try to understand the scenario. Some questions you could pose are:

- Can you come and go as you please?
- Have you been hurt or threatened if you try to leave?
- What is your relationship to the person you are with?

- Where do you live, eat, and sleep?
- Do you have any family or friends that you would like me to contact?

Compassion for Victim. Communicate with them that you are concerned and care about their safety through your empathy and compassion towards the potential victim. Stress that abuse is never their fault and that they do not deserve to live a life being restricted from family and friends. It is not a time for judgment or for condescending values. Instead, it is a time to let the victim know they are loved and cherished as individuals; no matter what their life experiences have been.

Awareness Notes. Take mental notes of all that you see if you suspect a trafficking situation. Some awareness notes may include:

- The physical features of the victim, including hair and eye color, size structure and clothing
- Physical features of the trafficker (if sighted)
- Visible factors such as tattoos, scars, or marks of abuse on victim
- Mental limitations may include fear of questions, distrust, or anxious behavior
- Car make and model, license plate, and color of vehicle

Reach Out for Help

Now is your time to act! Anyone who suspects human trafficking must reach out to authorities as soon as possible. Some of the best resources are:

- Call your local police department (911 in most communities) and provide the information you have about the potential trafficking scenario you witnessed

- Report your suspicion to the National Human Trafficking Hotline by phone: (888) 373-7888 or by text: 233733 (Text “HELP” or “INFO”)
- Visit: <https://traffickingresourcecenter.org> for additional information on resources available in your community

These resources are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to offer support.

Awareness In the Hearts of the Faith-Focused Community

Faith-based entities have a critical role in the anti-trafficking fight. As integral members of the community, faith communities are in a position to identify situations of trafficking, report suspected activity to authorities, and possibly even connect victims to life-saving resources through information ascertained through the Trafficking Resource Center (TRC). TRC is a national center that connects individuals with human trafficking resources by providing invaluable information about all aspects of trafficking.

Faith-based organizations often have a natural platform to contribute to many aspects towards combating human trafficking. Organizations of faith share common values of love and compassion for those who are hurting and an established infrastructure for serving the community and meeting people’s needs. Victims of trafficking cannot begin the process of healing unless they are “found.”

Ministry is not meant to be single-church or denomination driven. The focus needs to be cause-driven, compassion-focused, and love-based. By embracing other organizations in many different areas of service, it can help to increase its impact in communities. The ministry may want to consider no longer being just about broad categories such as missions, evangelism, or discipleship, because the world has so many

far-reaching needs. Other considerations could be focused on clean water initiatives, global hunger, and human sex trafficking. The Gospel must always be the catalyst.

For the Christian, the key is to uncover the will of God for one's life to find where God is at work and join Him there. The Scriptures testify that if one desires to find where God is at work, it is important to look for those who are vulnerable and hurting. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ." (1 Cor 1:3-5)

The believer does not have to bring the God of Justice to those who are hurting, because God is already there. So, it is up to the faith-based to become aware of the community's needs and provide service to their community. By becoming aware of the other service organizations who serve trafficking victims, faith-based organization can become a unified presence in the battle to fight human trafficking while their ability to serve their community needs will be amplified. Author Annie Lobert shares in *Fallen*:

As I devoured the Bible, one of the first things I learned was about my identity in Christ. In my past, I had let the media and culture define who I was. How thin I was supposed to be, how pretty I was to look, what kind of car I should drive, where I needed to live, and how much money was needed in my bank account. The truth was that the media and culture did nothing but lie to me. None of those things made me happier, smarter, or prettier. I was so tired of the peer pressure to be perfect, of trying to make everyone like me and accept me for what they saw on the outside. So I took a stand. I no longer wanted to live with a mask to please others. In my old life, I was always worried about what people thought about me and allowed that worry to control me like a god. So I would give whatever I had financially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually to others in hope they would give me back what I needed. I thought I needed them to love me. But the truth is, they never really did. They loved what I gave them, but did not love me as a person. After I started my new life, I decided that if God could accept me for who

I was without any strings attached, then people who truly loved me would accept me too. And even if they didn't, so be it. It was their loss¹⁸³

The Foundation of the Faith-Based Organization

The foundation of a faith-based organization's anti-trafficking focus should involve prevention. The definition and scope of prevention is broad, just as human trafficking is. It entails raising awareness and recognizing the need for intervention. While the scope of human trafficking can be far-ranging, it is important for faith-based leaders to understand that God has designed their organization to play a critical role in this fight. When the many issues that make people vulnerable to human trafficking are considered, the suffering of the victims will become a higher priority for faith-based leaders to embrace.

By becoming aware of the problem of human trafficking and allowing this awareness to open our eyes to potential trafficking activities, it is the first step in helping the victim break the chains that bind them. There are limitless possibilities that can be used for awareness outreach. By being aware of our surroundings and watching for potential scenarios of trafficking is a crucial tool in the fight against the crime. Street outreach is an example of working together to make a difference by forming small groups of individuals and actually integrate into areas where trafficking activities are more prevalent. In addition, there is the opportunity to learn more through the National

¹⁸³ Lobert, *Fallen*, 164.

Trafficking Center website: <https://traffickingresourcecenter.org> for additional information on resources available in your community.

Although often it is human nature to run from our weaknesses rather than acknowledge them, it is our own vulnerability that gives us the platform to serve other broken people. Faith-based missions are to serve. Helping leaders of faith to become more aware of the problem of human trafficking and then empowering them to recognize the broken individual is the answer. They can then begin to equip their members with the training necessary to develop an outreach program to uncover trafficking victims within their city.

Many community services are already available to offer support to victims, so the goal is not for leaders to recreate the wheel. Instead, the vision is for faith-based organizations to become aware of other local organizations that may already be providing services and to develop a clearer understanding of the role they can fulfill in the fight against human trafficking. In *The Church That Never Sleeps*, the author explains:

You may take off fast toward a dream, but then as you get closer, you find out that some of the toughest steps are yet to come. The two hardest things in life are to start and to finish. Many people can't get started on a dream, and other fail to make the final push to finish it. So, the important thing is to finish strong.¹⁸⁴

Call to Action for Christians

Why should this become a focus for the faith community? Because loving those who are suffering is what Christianity is all about. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). It's time to carry the burdens

¹⁸⁴ Matthew Barnett, *The Church That Never Sleeps* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2000): 182.

of trafficking victims. Consider these ten courses of action to help bring Light into the darkness for the victims of sex trafficking.

Ten Courses of Action

Educate. Learn all you can about human sex trafficking and then share the facts with others. Uncover how trafficking affects your community through resources provided on the National Human Trafficking website and other sources. Then, seek ways to educate your community on how to:

- Identify victims on the streets
- Respond to potential trafficking scenarios
- Prevention by hosting experts on trafficking
- Encourage survivors to share their stories and testimonies
- Hold events to share films about trafficking and discuss actions to take

Prevent. Faith communities are already equipped to support prevention because they are often already working with the source of the situation that open the door for sex trafficking: poverty, domestic abuse, mental illness, runaway youth, and so many other issues in our communities. Serving these areas of needs is an important step towards prevention.

Report. We must all take on the role of “mandatory reporters” if we become aware of a potential human sex trafficking situation. If you believe you have information about a trafficking happening, immediately call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888.373.7888. Trained volunteers are available 24/7 to answer your call. All calls are

confidential and you will remain anonymous. Promote this contact number by posting it and including it in your community news.

Advocate. Be an advocate for stronger legislation in your local communities and throughout your state. Contact your legislators and encourage them to support legislation that will help victims and enhance punishment against traffickers. Resources are necessary to combat human trafficking at local, state, and federal levels.

Partner. It is not necessary to recreate the wheel, since there are many organizations already involved in the fight against trafficking. Collaboration of services are needed to cover the large scope of the many facets of trafficking. Every state in the nation has trafficking organizations and initiatives already in place. Join an interfaith coalition or a local task force to strengthen your potential towards making a difference. Partner with civic organizations or anti-trafficking entities already fighting the battle. You could also start your own initiative and invite others to join you.

Volunteer. Encourage others within your faith community to volunteer their talents and their time to support local anti-trafficking initiatives. There are unlimited opportunities to give back. Your skills can be the asset that is needed to complete the picture for a trafficking victim. Offer time to tutor, serve as a mentor, help teach new skills to survivors, offer rides for necessary appointments, provide daycare within your facility to children of former trafficking victims, and so many more options to offer those who so desperately need your time and talents.

Roll Out the Welcome Mat. Welcome trafficking survivors into your faith organization. It does not matter what their history is; they are broken individuals that need a healing dose of faith and love. Survivors are in desperate need of a support system that they can lean and depend upon. Avoid judgment and do not try to counsel. Instead, provide an environment of unconditional love, listen to their stories if they choose to share, and open your facility as a safe harbor, providing resources that may include education, daycare, and specialized services provided by the individuals who make up your organization. Another option is to collect clothes, coats, and other necessities to support the many needs of these hurting individuals.

Donate Services. Help your organization to uncover services that they could offer to trafficking victims. Each of their members is skilled in some level or working for a business that may be able to help support victims of trafficking. Some ideas include:

- Beauticians could provide special hair care services as well as make up and nail care, which offers the gift of personal care for broken survivors.
- Handymen and builders can help repair and maintain safe houses and victim's new home needs.
- Attorneys could offer legal services while accountants may offer tax and financial services.
- Schools and universities can provide education and vocational training to help victims get a new start in life.
- Health care providers may be able to assist victims with their many physical needs while mental health workers could provide support for their mental needs by helping to empower their strengths to strive for a brighter future.

Help Through Funding. Funds and resources are needed for organizations to continue to support anti-trafficking initiatives. Hold a special collection to donate to local and national organizations who are already on the battlefield in the fight against trafficking.

Purchase Hand-Made Products. Look for organizations that are helping victims of trafficking by selling their hand-made products. One such entity, Women At Risk, Inc.,¹⁸⁵ employs trafficking survivors to teach them the trade of jewelry making. Then, they sell the jewelry to purchasers and utilize the money to build safe houses for survivors.

Reaching Outside Your Doors

Create a Donation Drive. Spread awareness by hosting a donation drive and inviting the public. You could create a Giving Tree, so people could choose a special ornament with needs for a trafficking victim. In addition, you could hold a donation drive to support your endeavor to fight trafficking or a local entity that is already established to support anti-trafficking initiatives.

Host an Outreach Event. Sponsor a seasonal event to support the battle against trafficking. An event could be informational and inspiring to involve others in your

¹⁸⁵ www.warinternational.org

initiative. Offer parents training geared towards prevention or various respite events for victims or at-risk individuals throughout the year.

Wrap Around Your Community. The goal is to serve as the hands and feet of God by equipping the community with information and resources and offering the opportunity to support at-risk families within your local community. Reach out to neighborhoods that are struggling and offer a helping hand. Provide needed resources to at-risk children in your community and help them strengthen their faith and trust in a God of mercy and grace. Build a bridge between the hurting and your organization where broken individuals can come and receive the unconditional love they crave so desperately. As author Mary Frances Bowley explores how we can make a difference through God's intervention in *The White Umbrella*:

While accepting that shattered lives surround us, too often we give in to the false notion that one person can't really make a huge difference in such a messed up world. This weak rationalization, most likely nothing more than a cover-up for our selfish ways, fashions the blinders that protect our eyes and keep our hands clean. As long as we are convinced that "somebody like me" can't really do anything to turn the tide, we can continue to exist in our self-made bubbles of comfort and ignore God's beating heart. Yet throughout history, in the dark night of need, God awakens ordinary people to the torrent of His love, shattering the silence and fueling in their hearts an unquenchable desire to spread the love they've found in the broken and discarded.¹⁸⁶

Conclusion

The gift we, as a faith community, can give to individuals who have been crushed by the horrific conditions of human sex trafficking is the gift of compassion and support. Our faith directs us to care for the hurting and provide for those who need our care.

¹⁸⁶ Bowley, *The White Umbrella*, 11.

Proverbs 11:25 states that: “Whoever brings blessings will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.” We are blessed to be a blessing to others. Everyone has the potential to discover a human trafficking situation, since the victim is often hidden right in front of us. You CAN make a difference!

Time to turn hell into Heaven. Find a purpose in this evil.
I am the face of trafficking. An age-old horror that has reigned too long.
Raise an army. See the reality. Save our children.

I have had many faces. Forced to be many people.
Finding myself has been a long journey. A chilling road.
I need to know that little girl again. Find and heal her wounds.
Nurture strength from within. From Above.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Flores, *The Slave Across the Street*, 199.

SECTION 4:

ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The artifact will be the development of a book to help faith-focused individuals and organizations become more aware of sex trafficking victims they may pass by every day in our communities. It will provide the first steps towards unlocking the chains of human trafficking for victims. By becoming more aware of victims who live within our cities who are in the bondage of sex trafficking, this book will provide Christians with the opportunity to make a difference in the fight against sex trafficking. There is nothing normal about the life of these victims. They are generally always products of abuse and neglect and need people to be aware of their presence and their struggle, so their circumstances can change, and they can find freedom from captivity.

The book will be titled *Lies of the Streets* and will help answer questions about victims and their traffickers, including how to recognize a victim and where to turn for help. When we believe in the lie that human trafficking only happens in other cities or other parts of the world, we are turning our eyes from the problem within our own communities. By helping faith-focused individuals and organizations become more aware of human trafficking and by equipping them with the necessary tools for reporting suspected trafficking, it provides the opportunities for authorities to track down both the victims and the perpetrators to aid in the battle on our streets. This is a major step in fulfilling the Christian belief that we should care for our neighbors and support the hurting individuals in this world.

This book will equip faith-focused individuals with the tools necessary to assess the situation, ascertain the needed information to provide to authorities, and make the call

that could save someone's life. Human trafficking is a cruel life for the victim, and our role as faith-based people is to care about the victims and aid them in their passage from "*victim to survivor*" by helping them break the chains that bind them.

SECTION 5:

ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

Title

Lies of the Streets

Helping Christians Take a Stand Against Human Sex Trafficking

Author:

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Overview:

The focus of my book, *Lies of the Streets*, will provide a road map for helping faith-based individuals and organizations become aware of the presence of human sex trafficking in their own backyards. The purpose of this book is to serve as an impetus to initiate the process of encouraging, empowering, and equipping entities of faith to become more aware of human sex trafficking while providing the necessary tools to take the first steps towards rescuing the victims of trafficking when the *invisible lies of the streets* become visible to them.

Purpose:

- Encourage - inspire faith-focused individuals and organizations to get involved in the fight against human sex trafficking by introducing them to prevention techniques to help address the problem through awareness and involvement in the cause.
- Empower - help individuals of faith understand the need to get involved, because Scriptures authorize us to do so. "Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:4)
- Equip - provide the necessary tools for individuals and entities of faith to understand the problem and to battle against the invisible cages that imprison human sex trafficking victims.

Promotion and Marketing

After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from Western Michigan University, I worked as a news reporter and free-lance writer for nearly ten years. Through connections in the media world, I have been able to make contacts with publishing companies who are already interested in the possibility of helping me publish my book. Marketing avenues will be provided through my publishing connections but

also through other resources and organizations I am involved in. In addition, I plan to utilize social media through blogs, postings, and human trafficking news updates.

Competition

Few books have tackled the faith-focused market in the fight against human sex trafficking. Faith-based organizations have often shied away from sex trafficking because of the sexual stigma and the extensive scope of the world of human trafficking. My book will provide tools and techniques to assist in opening the doors of awareness to help meet the needs of victims within our local communities.

Book Format

The book will include twelve chapters to cover the necessary points for encouraging, empowering, and equipping the faith-focused community. The contents will be laid out in various ways to describe the problem, involve the community, help to explore aspects of who the victims and traffickers are, and create awareness and response options. In addition, there will be personal testimonies as well as a “faith walk towards healing” (which will be added as the book progresses).

Chapter Outline

1. Stacy’s Story
2. What Is Human Trafficking
3. Aspects of Human Sex Trafficking
4. Involving the Faith Community
5. The Victim
6. The Trafficker
7. Awareness in the Hearts of the Faithful
8. Christian Response to Helping Victims
9. The Prayer Center: Changing Lives
10. Facts About Human Sex Trafficking
11. Testimonies from Trafficking Victims
12. On the Horizon: A Faith Walk Into Healing

Intended Readers

The intended readers will be focused towards the faith-focused community. This will include individuals of faith, non-profit organizations, churches, and businesses that incorporate faith in their company vision. Yet, this book will also be an asset to the secular community, although much of its content will be faith-based directives.

Manuscript

The projected word count will be approximately 50,000 words with a completion date of September 2022. The budget to publish will be limited to the cost of the cover design (approximately \$500), since there has already been interest by a publishing firm to cover the initial publishing cost of this manuscript.

Author Bio

Nancy VanderRoest is a Licensed Professional Counselor, who has worked extensively in crisis counseling and with victims of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She has volunteered tirelessly to help serve the needs of human sex trafficking victims in her local community through organizations including the *Kalamazoo Human Trafficking Coalition* and *Women at Risk, Inc. (WAR)*. Nancy has gained a valuable skill set to help empower trafficking victims to aid them in the process of healing, so they can change their title from “victim” to “survivor” and become functioning citizens in society.

Published Credits

I have many published newsprint articles and have worked as a freelance writer for magazines and other print media. Although I have not had any previous published articles on human sex trafficking, I have worked extensively with trafficking victims and have written numerous blogs about the world of human sex trafficking while attending George Fox University as a doctoral student.

Ongoing Promotional Opportunities

The success of my book will be measured by the lives that it touches. This can be ascertained by the number of books that sell and the feedback from the readers. I will be able to promote this book at speaking venues throughout Michigan because of my involvement with Women at Risk, Inc., which is an international organization and is also a partner who will be backing my book.

In addition, I will be serving as a training specialist for the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) to provide the new required continuing educational training on human trafficking to all individuals who are licensed or registered with LARA (including nurses, professional counselors, physicians, dentists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, social workers, massage therapists, etc.) This will open a substantial opportunity for me to help others learn more about the crime of human trafficking as well as offer an additional opportunity to promote my book, *Lies of the Streets*.

SECTION 6:

POSTSCRIPT

Writing a book on human sex trafficking geared toward Christian individuals and organizations is an undertaking that I believe will be beneficial to help encourage faith-focused individuals to begin to look at the problem of trafficking and hopefully seek to fight against this prevalent crime. My experience working with victims of sex trafficking has been heart-wrenching at times but also heart-warming when victims are uncovered and perpetrators are brought to justice. The victims of sex trafficking are broken individuals who have often experienced varying types of torture at the hands of their traffickers. As a Licensed Professional Counselor, I have been blessed to be able to help these victims find empowerment in their pain and to journey with them as they begin to embrace the peace beyond all understanding that God gives to those who are hurting. It is an honor to serve as His disciple to help the helpless feel His strength.

What I learned from writing this dissertation is that Christians have compassion for these victims but don't know how to help in the battle against trafficking because of the extensive scope of the problem. Through the research process of bringing together a group of faith-based leaders in our local community to discuss how we can best serve human sex trafficking victims, I gained valuable insight into the hearts of faith-based individuals and their desire to tackle this crime against innocent victims. Through many ongoing discussions, we were able to draw up an outline of goals and objectives about how to reach the victims and how to make a difference in the world of trafficking.

As we outlined the steps and directives to encourage leaders of faith to participate in the battle, we uncovered many avenues that individuals could not pursue as untrained

lay people. Because of my background in counseling, I was hoping to introduce the possibility of faith-based organizations becoming more involved in the “counseling” of sex trafficking victims. But it was soon uncovered that most lay individuals do not have the skills or the training to provide counseling services to victims of trafficking. Instead, what they can offer is awareness-based, compassion-led acknowledgement of the problem and learn prevention techniques to help uncover victims and to serve as mentors in various capacities.

In addition, Christians can become ambassadors to help enlighten others to the problem of trafficking in their local communities. As we focused as a group to define what an ambassador is, we designated the following description: *an ambassador for Christ is one who represents Christ, providing a link between our earthly presence and His Heavenly presence*. As ambassadors, we offer the link that trafficking victims need to find the healing available through God.

Use of Self-Published Books

Because of the valuable information I found in books that were “self-published” or not considered as textbook reference information, I chose to glean enlightening information from these books into my dissertation. I selected direct quotes as well as true stories that I felt would be informative for the reader.

These secondary sources of information provide a personal side of trafficking that people often do not see. These “lived” scenes (which are under-studied in academia) offer the reader an opportunity to “experience” the pain and turmoil that trafficking entails.

Although statistics have their place in research, it is through the eyes of the victims that we are able to feel the effects of trafficking and its toll on these individuals.

Faith-based preferences toward individual versus aggregate in connecting to reality is crucial for personal connection with the reader. It is a critical piece of the puzzle to help motivate and persuade others to choose to get involved in the battle against human sex trafficking. Without an emotional element, it limits the desire to want to make a change.

I also believe that women's voices often get lost in a world of topics that are often uncomfortable for men to understand. Since the majority of human sex trafficking victims are women, our culture often denies that trafficking is a wide-spread problem. Yet, the statistics and the shared "lived" experiences of women reflect a broken dichotomy in this belief and the reality of how prevalent this crime truly is.

Not only did these books offer a solid basis for my research, but they also provided current statistics that were valuable for my dissertation. The books I utilized had personal stories that provided a first-hand view of trafficking victims and their survival techniques. I believe these individualized explorations strengthen my dissertation, since they offer insight into the lives of human sex trafficking survivors. In addition, my desire is to connect to an non-academic audience, which will be central to the next stage of my work.

Conclusion

I will feel successful if I am able to make a difference in the fight against human sex trafficking by providing valuable tools to help individuals and organizations begin to

understand the need to take on the fight against trafficking. In my dissertation, I've introduced ideas about how to pick out a piece of the puzzle (since human trafficking encompasses numerous parts of an extensive crime package) and then fitting this necessary piece into the potential finished puzzle that reflects an end to human sex trafficking. I've learned that although human trafficking seems overwhelming to tackle, we can always make a difference...one step at a time.

Ongoing research is necessary to continue the fight, as human sex trafficking is a changing game for traffickers. As media exposure increases, so will trafficking increase. Young women become vulnerable targets when they open themselves up to the internet. Traffickers are always watching and buyers (johns) are always waiting in the wings. So, prevention is necessary to teach young girls about the dangers of "advertising themselves" on the internet. Each picture posted and every selfie displayed is a new advertisement to a perpetrator.

My desire is to not have this book sit on a shelf in someone's office but instead to be an impetus to spark change in the way we view human sex trafficking. It is not a "happening" that only takes place in third world countries. It is truly in our backyards and we cross paths with trafficking victims on a regular basis but often do not recognize the situation. It is imperative to stay safe when responding to a trafficking scenario but we must also find ways to make a difference and help protect the victim from the horrors of captivity and abuse. It is time to break the chains and set the captives free.

APPENDIX A:

ARTIFACT

Lies of the Streets

Helping Christians Take a Stand Against

Human Sex Trafficking

Written by: Nancy VanderRoest

BOOK CHAPTERS

Chapter 1	Stacy's Story
Chapter 2	What is Human Trafficking
Chapter 3	Aspects of Sex Human Trafficking
Chapter 4	Involving the Faith Community
Chapter 5	The Victim
Chapter 6	The Trafficker
Chapter 7	Awareness in the Hearts of the Faithful
Chapter 8	Christian Response to Help Victims
Chapter 9	The Prayer Center: Changing Lives
Chapter 10	Facts About Human Trafficking
Chapter 11	Testimonies from Trafficking Victims
Chapter 12	In Development

CHAPTER 1

Stacy's Story

With lips like a rose bud and the most gorgeous head of dark hair, Stacy entered this world like a bright star arising in the night sky. We all knew she was destined for something special. As a child, Stacy was curious and excitable. She hung out with the neighborhood kids and enjoyed time with her brothers and sisters. She also had a special friend in our neighborhood, whom many of the local kids adored. Mr. Goodman was a retired teacher and Boy Scout leader. We, as parents, trusted him as a mentor and friend of so many of the youth in our little part of the city and respected him for his involvement. He was a trusted confidante and involved member of our community.

As Stacy hit the teen years, we began to notice some rebellion flowing from our precious 'adopted niece.' Although she had wonderful parents, Stacy was a special part of our family. My background as a Licensed Professional Counselor allowed me the skill set to learn inside truths about youth who spent time at our house. I sensed a change in Stacy that was unanticipated and confusing. Goth dress was a prevalent choice for kids at that time, so when Stacy turned toward Goth, we weren't overly alarmed but were disappointed. (Goth is someone who finds beauty in things others consider to be dark.) The negative look at life was not a good presence for her and she began to spiral in a way that we could not understand or decipher.

Since I was a personal friend, I disassociated myself from serving as Stacy's counselor but that did not mean I didn't introduce counseling to her. I knew some of the best therapists in our community and Stacy was introduced to and worked with each and every one of them. There were suggestions of anti-social behavior and borderline

personality disorder but not a conclusive understanding was reached. But Stacy's perspective of her feelings was described through her journal passages:

I have always felt different than probably most people, even when I was very young. I felt like I didn't belong, like I wasn't good enough. I struggled in school, at home around my family, everywhere I went. I had trouble getting along with others, following directions and keeping up in school, so I began to goof around a lot. I began getting into trouble at school and was falling way behind the rest of my classmates. It made me feel dumb and I began to act out even more.

Stacy became more and more distant from adults and with her peers. She also began to reach out to other resolutions to find peace.

By the time I got to sixth grade, I had no idea what was going on in any of my classes, so I just started skipping school and hanging out with a bunch of older kids who were all into smoking cigarettes, weed, popping pills, drinking alcohol, dropping acid, doing cocaine, etc. Anything we could get our hands on was game, so that's what I did too.

When Stacy was in eighth grade, she swallowed two handfuls of Vicodin and overdosed. She ended up in the hospital to get her stomach pumped. This was also the first time she was admitted into a rehabilitation treatment center to detox and get some needed intensive therapy. However, after rehab, Stacy returned to the same environment and the same problems. In her journal, she testifies:

I hated life and everything and everyone around me. Life was a living hell. I didn't feel like anyone cared about me and I just hurt so badly inside. I tried to

numb the pain by any means possible: men, drugs, alcohol, and self-harm; yet nothing worked. Everything was just darkness; a big, black, gaping hole inside and I kept getting worse into drugs, more trouble with the law, spent time in and out of juvenile detention, and nothing mattered.

It was at this time that Stacy was admitted to a runaway/treatment center called The ARC. Stacy's parents were called in one day to be told that they suspected sexual abuse had taken place in Stacy's life. Since her parents were overly watchful and protective of their daughter when they had her under their control, they denied that sexual abuse could have occurred. But during a session with a psychiatrist, Stacy finally acknowledged and admitted that she had been sexually abused by none other than the trusted neighborhood pillar of the community, Mr. Goodman. By this time, Mr. Goodman had passed away, so there were no repercussions for him. The price, instead, was being paid by Stacy. Even after the admission, Stacy continued to spiral from the hurt and abuse. Many treatment programs followed, but each time Stacy would return to her world of torture and pain. She further described:

I was in and out of jail so many times that I lost count. It didn't matter to me; nothing did. I lost everything I had and pushed everybody out of my life. I couldn't keep anything, so what was the point? I was homeless, a criminal, a drug addict, and mentally ill on top of it all. It was hopeless. My entire life I had tried to numb out the pain by one drug or another, one man after another, one crime after another. It was the only thing I thought I could do - to just not feel anymore.

It was then that Stacy met up with Jimmy. Jimmy reached out to Stacy after meeting her at the local mall. Jimmy immediately began courting Stacy and the grooming began. Stacy explained in her journey:

Jimmy was my everything. He understood me and accepted me – even with all my flaws and anger. He helped me understand that my life wasn't meant to be lived under the umbrella of an overbearing family and untrustworthy school system. Jimmy helped me to believe that I was worthy of his love and his protection. He picked me up from my pain and helped me to feel loved again. He was my knight in shining armor and when he asked me to be his girlfriend, I knew it was where I was meant to be.

Stacy began to distance herself from her family and friends and allowed Jimmy to call all the shots. Jimmy was “caring” for her in every way: providing shelter, clothing, food, and drugs – all under the heading of ‘love.’ But, of course, Stacy had a role to play and that was to entertain Jimmy’s friends as well. Jimmy introduced friend after friend, and the more money that Stacy brought in, the better drugs she received. So, Stacy was in a spiral she had no way of getting out of. In her own words, she stated:

By the age of 19, I was fully addicted to crack cocaine, which lasted about four years until I was introduced to methamphetamine, which I started out smoking but couldn't get the high I wanted, so I started shooting up. I was a monster. I was consumed and destroyed in a life of pain, shame, and regret. I felt like a shell with no soul, a walking dead girl, who was tortured within. I wanted to all to end. I felt dirty, ashamed, condemned, lost, and alone in the world.

Stacy could not be reached through therapy or through compassion. The wounds were too deep, and the pain owned her. But through our close connection, I was finally able one day to get Stacy to attend a local church with me. There was a program there that I felt might be beneficial for her. It was called, “Soul Sisters” and it is a program that helps women get away from human trafficking. Of course, Stacy did not see herself as being trafficked. She felt she made her own choices in this world and that no one was taking advantage of her in any way.

It took intensive teaching for me to help Stacy understand that indeed, this was trafficking that she was experiencing and that selling her body for drugs or love was exactly what trafficking entailed. Through a strong Christian faith (and literally thousands of prayers), I was finally able to help Stacy begin to see the light through the darkness that had surrounded her for so long. Stacy’s surrender to God helped her let go of her need to control her world and allowed an amazing Higher Power to help her trust in the love that was surrounding her; both on earth and in Heaven. Stacy wrote:

Little did I know that this was going to be the miracle that would change my destiny. Not only did God hear my cries, He gave me hope that I could have never imagined even existed. The people at the church actually accepted me, welcomed me, and believed in me. I was certain I was past the point of no return, so I thought they were wasting their time. But they stayed with me and kept loving the me that wasn’t worth loving. Even when I continued to get strung out on the drugs that wouldn’t let go, they continued to walk with me. They trusted that God had His hand on me.

It took heavy therapeutic intervention as well as the power of prayer to help Stacy break away from Jimmy and the world of drugs. It was a slow, painful process, but she continued to attend intensive therapy sessions, including DBT (Dialectic Behavior Therapy), REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy), Motivation for Change courses, Awareness Training, Substance Abuse Management and Cognitive Behavior Therapy as well as a psychiatrist to support her endeavors. In addition, she had Christian mentors, was involved in a Narcotics Support Group, and continued to work with Soul Sisters. In one of Stacy's later journal entries, she wrote:

For the first time in my life, I was not using drugs and not covering up my pain from the abuse. I was starting to open up and face the wreckage of my past. The longer I kept clean, the more I continued to heal. I knew I couldn't stop because if I did, I would die. This was my one chance, and I was ready to do whatever it took. I think God must have seen my complete brokenness, so He not only forgave me, but was showing me that I had value and purpose. I felt finally loved.

CHAPTER 2

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is not secret! It is present in our communities every day and millions of individuals across the world are victims. It is the second largest criminal enterprise in the world and is a nearly \$150 billion-dollar industry with 40 million victims worldwide who are being trafficked. It often affects the most vulnerable populations, including women and children, victims of previous abuse, and runaway youth.

Trafficking is a well-defined version of modern-day slavery. Although there are differences in the definition of trafficking, most generally it can be defined as the recruitment, harboring, or maintaining of a person by means of force or coercion. This may include the trade of women and children for prostitution or other immoral purposes. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines trafficking as a sex trade in which a commercial sex act is dictated or if the individual is under the age of 18. While human trafficking is a serious federal crime, it is a crime that is often difficult to prosecute.

The Client

She looked young and frightened as she slowly walked into our counseling center. Not looking up, her gaze instead focused on the tile floor that she slumbered across as she passed through our lobby and to the front desk where our receptionist greeted her warmly. The welcoming presence of a caring individual encouraged her to make eye contact with the smiling face looking back at her through the glass partition. The eyes that met those of our office staff were hollow and strained. When she was asked a question, there was no response, just the blank stare of a heavy sedated young woman.

Sex Trafficking

Although there are different types of trafficking (including forced labor and debt bondage), sex trafficking is the most recognized form of human trafficking. It affects mostly women and children, although men can also be trafficked. The premise of sex trafficking is the engagement of a victim in acts of commercial sex. Any child under the age of 18 in the United States is considered a trafficking victim if they have been involved in an act of commercial sex. Nearly 80% of trafficking victims are women and children.

Learning the signs of who the victims of sexual human trafficking are and what creates the opportunity for a person to be victimized are necessary pieces in the battle against trafficking. It is through awareness that offers the opportunity for faith-focused individuals to reach out and make a difference. But how does one become aware of the trafficking world around them? It is important to understand the prevalence of the problem.

The Counselor Enters

As I approached the new client standing in my office to introduce myself as the counselor who would be helping, I looked into a young face of a woman who appeared as though the world had beaten her in the game of life. I guessed her age to be in her mid 30's (while I later found out she was in her early 20's). I quickly noted signs of unexplained bruising as well as scars from cutting on her arms. Her clothing was disheveled, and her hair was matted. Everything about this client reflected the signs of a drug addict but I had the instinct there was more to this story.

Numbers Tell the Story

Sexual human trafficking is a market-driven criminal industry that is based on the principles of supply and demand, like drugs or arms trafficking. Many factors make children and adults more vulnerable to human trafficking. Yet, human trafficking does not exist only because individuals are vulnerable to exploitation. Instead, human trafficking is fueled by a demand for commercial sex. Human traffickers are those who employ force to victimize others in their desire to profit and meet the existing demand. To solve the problem of human trafficking, it is essential to address these demand-driven factors, as well as change the market incentives of high-profit and low-risk, that traffickers currently exploit.

The International Labor Organization estimates that over 40 million people are being trafficked worldwide every day. Providing the link between supply and demand are the traffickers, who can range from large scale crime organizations to loose networks to individuals. As the demand increases, the victims increase.

Human trafficking is happening right now in our backyard, not just in other parts of the world. Nearly 800,000 children are reported missing in the United States every year and nearly 2,200 every day. According to the President and CEO of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Ernie Allen, “Researchers estimate that one-third of street prostitutes in the United States are under the age of 18, while over half of the off-street prostitutes (the invisible victims) are less than 18. With the explosion in the sale of kids for sex online, it is clear that more kids are at risk today than ever before.”

The Client's Accompanying "Friend"

Most notably, at the side of this young woman stood a man who had a firm grasp on her arm. At first glance, he appeared as though he may be trying to hold her up. He looked well-dressed and spoke articulately with an approximate age of 40. It didn't matter that my client didn't speak, because the man with her had answers to all the questions - and didn't hesitate to serve as her mouthpiece. Because this was established as a couples counseling session, I didn't have a choice but to allow him to participate in our discussion.

America's Children

Sex trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. Unlike most statistics, the stats of human trafficking have a pulse: they are America's daughters, sisters, nieces, and sometimes sons. Every number represented in these stats has a name and is someone's child. However, experts suggest that these numbers are low, because the lack of awareness of human trafficking can lead to under-reporting. In a five-year period ending to 2019, reports of suspected child sex trafficking has risen 846%.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported more than 2.3 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation in 2019. Yet, how accurate are these numbers? The numbers are validated only through calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, which means there are possibly hundreds (or even thousands) of victims that are not yet identified.

Why Trafficking Exists

Human trafficking exists mainly because of the huge profit opportunities. Human traffickers value profit over life. It's all about the money. The annual average profit generated by each woman forced into sexual trafficking can be as high as \$300,000 per victim.

Human trafficking also exists because of *demand*, which fuels the growth of human trafficking. Sex slavery today has made sexual service opportunities more available, which has increased demand. One of the largest contributing factors is the internet, which has created a huge global market for traffickers. It makes pornography more readily available, increasing men's addiction to it and increasing the demand. The pornography industry is a profitable business world, with estimates of financial benefit being nearly \$12 billion annually in the United States.

Her Story

This young woman had a story to tell but appeared to not have the energy or the desire to speak. Instead, her gentleman friend shared her story as I listened, while keeping a close eye on my client. He shared that he was a realtor and he had picked up this individual to get her off the streets. He stated that he has been providing food, shelter, and clothing for her, but knew she needed more help than he could give her. I posed each question directly to my client, but she did not make any attempt to answer my questions. Instead, her counterpart spoke for her throughout the session.

If there was no one in the business of purchasing sex, no one would be supplying. There are three main parts that make up the “demand” scenario: (1) men who purchase sex; (2) the traffickers who make up the sex industry; and (3) the culture that promotes and allows sexual exploitation. Other factors that play a role in sex trafficking include: lack of accountability for traffickers and for the johns who purchase sex, easy access to pornography, gender inequalities, and increased globalization. In addition, there is a lack of services for victims once they have been rescued, and without services in place, many rescued victims go back to the life they are most familiar with: sex trafficking.

Lack of accountability for traffickers (pimps) and buyers (johns) has been an ongoing issue for the victims and for law enforcement to pursue. The motives for traffickers and buyers are different but the responsibility of doing 'wrong' is similar. Traffickers are in the business to make money by trapping and exploiting victims. Traffickers also often feel the power of slave ownership. The rewards are high and the risks are low. Traffickers become wealthy from the selling of innocent people by controlling them through lies, violence, and drugs.

Buyers (johns) purchase sex and rape children for power and control. Studies reflect that one-third of buyers are aware that the children they are paying for were lured, tricked or forced into providing sex. They also are aware that many of these individuals are underage. Yet, they continue to purchase sex for the thrill of having someone submit to them. Most buyers have family, wives, and girlfriends but report that they want the "porn" experience. Often, this includes role play, violence, and torture.

Studies have reflected that often buyers start out by viewing pornography. There is a progression of getting addicted to porn and then normalizing it and finally acting out on it. In some states, pornography has been identified as a health crisis. Viewing porn on an ongoing basis changes the brain and the way it operates. It has actually been compared to drug addiction. Nearly 70% of all men and about 40% of women regularly view pornography. This ongoing input into the brains of regular viewers causes conflicts within the brain, which confuses 'right' from 'wrong.' Girls of the average age of 12-13 are often the targets, and their lives are destroyed in the process of becoming sex slaves to sick individuals who have lost their way.

CHAPTER 3

Aspects of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has been recorded throughout history. Even in biblical times, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and though disputed, some church traditions believe that Mary Magdalene may have been a prostitute. But there is an increase in trafficking in today's world. With the high prevalence of pornography, a predator's ability to connect with broken individuals through the internet and the difficulties in tracking suppliers have allowed human trafficking to become one of the world's vastest criminal industries.

The first federal law regarding sex trafficking was enacted in the year 2000 in the United States. The Trafficking Victim's Protection Act (TVPA, 2000) is a law that states that human trafficking can be determined by the presence of three elements: *An Act of, By Means of, and For the Purpose of*. One element from each category must be present:

*There must be an **act** of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining, or selling; by the **means** of force, fraud, or coercion; for the **purpose** of sexual or labor exploitation, involuntary servitude, forced military service, or debt bondage.*¹⁸⁸

Unleashed Corruption

Political corruption and high crime allow for increases in the potential of trafficking. In addition, globalization has provided a worldwide platform for traffickers.

A study on trafficking done at John Hopkins University revealed:

Traffickers, taking advantage of transparent borders, broadband communication and political and economic upheaval as well as mass migration of people, have

¹⁸⁸ Amy Joy, *Human Trafficking 101: Stories, Stats, and Solutions* (Independently Published, 2019), 15.

preyed on the vulnerable and...have made trafficking into a booming business as well as a tragic fixture in our times. The continued treatment of millions of women and children as a commodity speaks volumes of the global community's failure to offer protection and opportunity across gender and age. The rapid proliferation of human trafficking and related brutality casts a dark shadow over the benefits that globalization has offered to many. Globalization has made the world a smaller place, but at a cost to many of the most vulnerable.¹⁸⁹

The consequences of trafficking on the world are severe. The political aspects of trafficking undermine democracy, rule of law, and governmental accountability. The corruption infiltrates the governmental systems while the profits bring about conflicts. Traffickers also pose a real threat to national security.

Yet, research on human trafficking has not moved beyond estimating the scale of the problem. Limited research has been done on the effectiveness of governmental policies or the overall effect that organizational efforts have contributed to combat the problem. Even less is known about trafficking of children. Research has shown that misconceptions of child trafficking result in the mislabeling of victims as child prostitutes, which actually increases the endangerment to the child. This is because prostitution is often thought of as a *choice* that a person makes rather than a situation that they were forced into. Yet, when youth are involved, prostitution is never an acceptable term to the scenario. Recognizing that survivors are victims rather than criminals has led many states to redefine prostitution as sexual abuse.

The Session

It was clear that a referral would be necessary to get this young woman into a treatment center, as she was unable to keep her eyes open and was clearly in drug withdrawal as evidenced by her twitching and her sleepiness. As I

¹⁸⁹ Daniel Walker, *God in a Brothel* (Downers Grove: IV Press, 2011), 187.

traveled through the intake process, I allowed limited input by the man and reiterated to the woman that she would need to answer the questions directly, since she was the one that was being referred to a local detox center. She was unable to answer many of the questions because of her addicted state but could answer yes and no questions with a nod or shake of the head. While trying to get the necessary questions answered for the referral, her friend was eager to answer. I questioned him as to how he knew so much about this young woman if he had just recently picked her up from the street. He, in return, had an answer for everything and shared that he was such a good listener that he knew her “inside and out.” My suspicions about this being a possible sex trafficking scenario increased with each word he spoke.

Barriers to Leaving

Reasons why survivors won't leave their situation may be because of emotional barriers, abuse, debt restrictions, and male privilege. The techniques of control used by domestic abusers to ensure the consent of their wives or girlfriends are similar to the tactics that traffickers use to recruit and keep their victims trapped. These tactics of power and control include threats and intimidation as well as emotional, sexual, and physical violence.

Reasons Why Victims Stay

Victims (especially adolescents) who become trafficked experience neurological effects that were often created from previous childhood physical, emotional, and sexual trauma. These effects inhibit their abilities to make choices or escape their captors. There is also the presence of fear that can create barriers to cognitive processing and decision-

making, which explains why victims don't run. Due to a lack of self-efficacy, childhood victims are more likely to accept the situation of abuse.

Brainwashing

In order to keep their victims so they do not flee, traffickers brainwash them, watch them very closely, and keep them isolated. Human trafficking victims experience psychological damage from being brainwashed and held captive. Behavioral problems can develop, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, which can cause them to relive their victimization over and over.

Traffickers control the victim's sense of self, often to the point of completely controlling their identity. They may even change the names and appearances of the individuals they prostitute. This promotes the idea that they have created a new person out of the victim, whose role is specifically for prostitution, which helps to prove the trafficker's ownership of 'his' property.

Fear Tactic

Captors often make a practice of controlling their victims through fear and intimidation. This violence impacts nearly 86% of victims of prostitution. Profit is the main reason that traffickers *peddle* their victims but being in power and presenting a powerful image is also important to a trafficker. In many neighborhoods, traffickers are looked upon as symbols of success. Yet, they are criminals who recruit, coerce and threaten their victims into the world of prostitution.

In addition to fearing their captors, victims may also fear how society will view them, and therefore, are less likely to report any act of violence towards them. There may be language barriers that keep them from escaping, making it nearly impossible for

victims to cooperate with authorities and to share their story of abuse. If victims were kidnapped, their families were often threatened as well as the life of the victim. Beatings, abuse, and repeated sex partners often lead to emotional disorders, health problems, substance abuse, and anxiety and depression.

Drug Dependence

Once traffic victims become involved in prostitution, they are often forced to travel far from their homes and become isolated from family and friends. They then need a way to support themselves, which trafficking offers. Involvement in drugs may be a contributing factor to their barrier to be able to leave the situation.

Getting a victim hooked on drugs is a common tactic in the sex trade. It is another way traffickers gain the cooperation and loyalty from their victim. Once a victim becomes an addict, they will do anything to get the drugs they crave. The more money a victim brings in, the better drugs he or she will receive from the trafficker.

Trauma bonding

The identification of victims with their abusers is known as the *Stockholm Syndrome*. Jaycee Dugard was a famous victim of kidnapping who was eventually rescued. She explained her relationship with her abuser in this way: “You are brainwashed; it’s as simple as that. I know people use that term a lot, but that’s what happens to you. It is like you are on autopilot, only someone else is controlling all the switches. They control every minute detail in your life.”

Trauma bonding is a survival mechanism that allows the victim to be able to endure torture during trafficking situations. It is an unnatural bond with one’s captor, but to the victim, it means survival. Trafficking survivors experience many layers of trauma.

Yet, survivors often feel indebted to their captor for not killing them. Dissociative disorders are common, since hiding or forgetting one's real self makes it possible to survive the horror of trafficking.

Victim Identity Confusion

Victims are continuously used over and over again until the trafficker no longer wants them due to older age and over-abuse. Many survivors develop a stigmatized identity. This identity is developed through moral shame and creates a mistrust in the survivor, which can lead to unstable relationships in the future. Due to the extended suffering that a victim endures, the victim may have a tendency to actually victimize other individuals because that is all they know. This is a way of enforcing the power that was stolen from them.

The Client's Future

From working with sex trafficking victims as a licensed professional counselor, I have learned that victims, even after rescue, will often return to the horrors of the trafficking world they came from because that is the world they know or are familiar with. Helping victims understand that they are "victims" is often a focus area. Because of prior abuse, many of these individuals do not realize they are objects of mistreatment and will instead put the blame on themselves for allowing themselves to become caught in the trafficking web. Because of past experiences, they may consider the situation they are in as predicable or expected because of their feelings of worthlessness and of having no value in their own eyes.

CHAPTER 4

Involving the Faith Community

Support for the victim is often limited and controversial. There have been efforts by federal governments all around the world that target human trafficking, but not enough to contain the problem. It has become a worldwide epidemic with an average of 2.5 million people trafficked at any given time throughout the nation.

Limited research has been done on the longevity of trafficking victims. But research done in the United States on mortality of prostitutes reveals a high probability of early death:

Most human trafficking victims don't survive. By the time they reach their twenties, they are worthless to the human trafficking trade. They're either drug-addicted or they become recruiters themselves. Many die from disease, drug overdose, or murder. Sometimes they see that their only way out is through suicide. In many cases, once children are recruited, their families don't hear from them again.¹⁹⁰

A statement from the International Organization of Migration explained that it is possible to repair broken jaws and bones, but it is not possible to mend the often-irreparable psychological damage to the victim. Research has shown that women who stopped engaging in trafficking had similar levels of mental health problems (40%) and drug addiction (73%) as those who remained in the sex industry.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Katariina Rosenblatt, *Stolen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2014), 15

¹⁹¹ Louise Shelley, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2018), 72

Hidden Problem

Since trafficking victims are often reluctant to identify themselves, rarely do victims come forward for help. Victims are often difficult to find and to reach. Many trafficking victims are taught to fear law enforcement; often because of past negative experiences they have either witnessed or experienced themselves. Also, trafficking victims fear the retribution by their traffickers. Awareness is the key to uncovering these individuals if a trafficking situation is suspected. But most people don't know how to spot a trafficking victim or whom to report a suspected trafficking situation to.

Mandatory Reporting

My suspicions of this couple led me to the conclusion that this was a suspected sex trafficking situation and that I was required by law to report it. Throughout our session, I took notes with regards to addresses, locations, alternative phone numbers, physical and mental appearances, and demeanor. I noted scars from cutting and tattoos were present. I also was able to get a bed ready for the young woman at the detox center, so that she could be directly admitted for detox services. With this information in hand, I placed a call to local authorities and described the scenario I had witnessed. I had to then release and trust that the authorities would take over the situation and that the chains of deceit would be broken for this young girl.

The Role of the Faith-Focused Community

Many faith-based organizations expressed that they have not participated in the fight against human trafficking because the scope of the problem is so big. There are limited resources available to help them understand the concepts of human trafficking and how to become aware of victims and the guidance for direction after a victim has

been identified. Victims are often illusive, and the signs of trafficking are frequently well-hidden by organized crime circuits.

The Christian faith directs its followers to seek out and help those who are less fortunate and who are hurting. Hebrews 13:16 states: “And do not forget to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Sharing means giving a part of ourselves to become a blessing for someone else in their struggles. As a Christian, life sometimes means getting “muddy” and reaching outside our comfort zone to help someone in need. It means reaching out of our church doors and into the streets where hurting individuals live. This is what becoming a disciple for Christ is all about. The definition of a disciple is someone who represents the presence of Christ through a ministry of serving others by bringing NEW LIFE into the secular world.

Creating Awareness

The problem is that we as a community cannot help the trafficking victim unless we understand and become aware of who the victims are. Learning to identify the victim is the first step towards helping the trafficked individual become a survivor. Sexual human trafficking is a camouflaged crime. It is difficult to identify victims, as they are often kept behind closed doors by their captor.

Helping faith-focused communities learn how to identify trafficking victims through the knowledge of awareness and then an understanding of where to turn for help when trafficking is suspected should be a major focus area in today’s Christian world. Matthew 5:16 explores: “In the same way [as Christ], let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.” By helping the

faith community embrace the fight to protect the innocent victims by equipping and empowering them with the knowledge needed to make a difference, the light can shine through them to help in the fight against human trafficking.

There has not been a definitive path for faith-based organizations to play a vital role in seeking justice and salvation for trafficking victims. Yet, faith-focused leaders have a responsibility to become more informed about human trafficking to equip the Christian community with the knowledge of awareness and enlightenment. It is the first step towards helping set people free, both spiritually and physically, of the bondage of human trafficking.

Helping organizations and leaders of faith see beyond the stigma of sexual abuse and look instead at the broken individual who is struggling to break the chains of slavery is the key. The problem is: how do we get the faith-based community to recognize the pain of these vulnerable individuals who are trafficked within our present society?

The answer is to help clarify the need for becoming aware of the problem of sexual human trafficking and then present opportunities to become ambassadors for the sexual trafficking victim. Organizations of faith and their leaders can also open the door to a community support system already in place to help the victim take the first step toward making the needed changes in their lives to transition from “victim” to “survivor.”

CHAPTER 5

The Victim

Recognizing the trafficking victim is the key to finding a solution to the problem. Individuals give off warning signs, which make them more vulnerable to becoming victims. Learning the basics of what traffickers are looking for is one of the first steps towards uncovering the invisible victims of trafficking.

Victims often don't realize they are victims, so their victimization becomes twisted for them. Though victims are forced to do crimes, this becomes a twisted concept for them, as they often believe they are the ones doing wrong instead of wrong being done to them.

Profile of the Victim

There's a major difference between slavery in the old days and modern-day slavery. In the past, slaves were captured. But today, most human trafficking victims have consented to go with their captors. Victims consent because they are lied to. They are duped by someone charming, smart, and narcissistic enough to destroy their victim's lives in horrendous ways. Their perpetrators lack compassion to care about people as people. It's all about the money and the benefit for them.

For traffickers, the human cost to their victims isn't even a consideration to them. The victims have no human value in their eyes; other than to line their own pockets. Yet, recognizing a trafficker is not easy. It has been thought that traffickers wore flashy clothes and carried golden canes. But traffickers today can be people who are considered virtuous members of your community. City leaders, political legislators, and even church

leaders can be traffickers without knowledge of their hidden identity. Traffickers have three things in common: manipulation, power, and control. Their goal is to make money in an industry with high profits and little risk. Their victims are often innocent individuals who have been 'coerced' into a way of life they don't know how to escape.

Sex Tourism

Because of the internet, having sex with children in the United States is as easy as ordering a pizza. That's because the U.S. is one of the world's largest destinations for sex tourism. Men create the demand for sex tourism, which criminals are eager to supply. It is the sex buyers who drive the sex industry and are in control. Buyers try to justify or normalize their actions by reflecting that their tourist and business dollars are providing a stimulus to the local economy, but their underlying motives are the same: self-fulfillment through sexual pleasure.

Statistics

According to the national reporting agency, The Polaris Project, approximately 300,000 children are traded for sex annually and most started at the average age of 12. The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 40% of confirmed sex trafficking victims are black, even though African Americans make up only 13% of the United States population.

Pedophiles

Pedophilia is the primary sexual attraction of adults to children. Pedophiles are predatory. They invest many hours of preparation to secure their desired goal. Pedophiles join together and organize clubs that provide supplier manuals and travel guides, which help members avoid prosecution and detection as they travel. Pedophiles are virtually unrecognizable and can be almost anyone.

Children are being victimized through prostitution, pornography, stripping, brothels, and other forms of commercial sex business because of consumer demand. Minor sex trafficking cases are growing exponentially, making it imperative that creative approaches to assisting youth are adopted.

Risk Factors

Victims often reflect risk factors that make them more vulnerable to traffickers who are always on the search for their next target. One common characteristic of prostituted girls is a history of childhood sexual abuse. In a study done with youth in a specialized treatment program in Florida, findings revealed that 86-91% of the youth had previous sexual abuse and/or other traumatic experiences prior to their exploitation into trafficking. The history of the childhood trauma experienced in trafficking may include physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse.

Girls involved in trafficking are more likely to come from a home where addiction was present. Also, girls who are more susceptible to trafficking have often witnessed domestic violence in their home, which helps to normalize their trafficking world. The brains of children experiencing trauma can become conditioned to seek out and accept the lies and coercion by predators, making it nearly impossible to escape their

childhood realities. The themes of trauma, abandonment and disruption often begin in childhood and create a lifelong vulnerability.

Child abuse and neglect often precipitate developmental disabilities, socializing problems, and poor school performance. Depression can also be a result. During traumatic events, the brain sends a signal to either run away or stay and fight. When neither flee or flight is an option, the brain goes into shut-down mode and freezes, which effects decision-making and problem solving. As traffickers exert control over the person through violence, victims feel they have no option but to submit. This leaves a child more vulnerable to abuse.

Vulnerabilities of the Victim

Understanding the grooming process is an important aspect of identifying and increasing awareness of human trafficking. The process begins by building trust. Traffickers know the behaviors that indicate vulnerabilities in potential victims. Traffickers look for signs of risky or deviant behaviors in adolescents as a common risk factor. Abuse, poverty, and mental disabilities can all be invitations to traffickers of potential vulnerable individuals.

Childhood Abuse of Victims

Child abuse and neglect are often precipitate developmental disabilities, socializing problems, and poor school performance. Depression can also be a result. Studies have shown that childhood abuse is a prevalent factor in opening the door to trafficking for young women.

Studies reveal that up to 90% of prostituted women have histories of childhood abuse. Problematic home lives are related to run-away or throwaway status. Runaway youth are those who choose to leave home for a period of time. Children often run away from home because of abuse, neglect, or even drug use by their parents. Throwaway youth are children whose parents kick them out of the house or abandon them. This can be because of the child abusing drugs or the parent's drug abuse, friction within the home, or parents who reject a child's identity (LGBTQ). The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported that 1 in 5 runaways are at risk for forced sexual exploitation.

Domestic Abuse Within the Home

Victims of trafficking are more likely to come from a home where addiction was present. In addition, trafficking victims have often witnessed domestic violence in their home, which helps to normalize their trafficking world. The brains of children experiencing trauma can become conditioned to seek out and accept the lies and coercion by predators, making it nearly impossible to escape their childhood realities. The themes of trauma, abandonment and disruption often begin in childhood and create a lifelong vulnerability.

Sexual abuse of victims

A common factor in trafficking victims is sexual abuse. Research through the Child Welfare Supplemental Survey reflected that 49% of sex trafficking victims had been victims of sexual assault while 95% reported a history of child maltreatment. Child sexual assault creates an open door into human trafficking.

Victim Predictors

Traffickers are predatory in nature and skilled at identifying vulnerable people. LGBTQ individuals are especially at risk of trafficking because of increased rates of high-risk behaviors and homelessness. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, sexual minority youth are twice as likely to experience sexual abuse before the age of 12 and over seven times more likely to become victims of sexual violence.

Race

People of color are often targets for traffickers. A U.S. Department of Justice report stated that more than 40% of confirmed sex trafficking victims were African American. The same report found that 23% were Hispanic, and nearly 5% were Asian. Those who are racially marginalized in society are disproportionately exposed to the risk factors of victimization: poverty, less education opportunities, and increased involvement in foster care systems.

Mental Disabilities

Intellectual disabilities also heighten vulnerability. Low intelligence disability increases susceptibility to sex trafficking, because of limited understanding about their rights to decline sex by the intended victim. In addition, traffickers often purposely target vulnerable individuals. They can tell by the way someone talks, walks, or even the way they look. Just answering a question can often be a sign for traffickers that a vulnerability lies within the potential victim. This then tells the trafficker how easy it will be to trick, lure, or coerce the individual into trafficking. A traffickers may then spend months grooming the individual, because in the end, this victim is where the money is.

Youth in Foster Care

Children in the foster care system are often targeted by traffickers. Children may be at an increased risk for sexual exploitation because of multiple placements in private homes and group homes. A study noted that close to two-thirds of children investigated as victims of trafficking had a history of child abuse and prior child protective services involvement. A Child Welfare Supplemental Survey further indicated that 95% of trafficking victims interviewed reported a history of child abuse with nearly 50% experiencing sexual abuse.¹⁹²

Foster care youths are more susceptible to trafficking because those who seek to exploit youth will target those who are vulnerable. Foster youth often experience a lack of belonging or a connection with their caretakers, creating the feeling that no one cares about them. This leads to instances of running away from their foster home, leaving them even more vulnerable on the streets.

The foster care system has a high prevalence of evasive human trafficking. Nearly 63% of all child sex trafficking victims have a history in the child welfare system. Foster care involvement differentiates the experiences of childhood and impacts future options and choices for children in care. Foster care youth are targeted because they are often already broken victims of trauma and abuse, which are exactly what traffickers are looking for. Foster care youth experience a lack of belonging and feel an absence of support from caretakers.

¹⁹² Debra Schilling Wolfe, "Foster Care Youth at Risk for Child Sex Trafficking," *Social Work Today* (Jan 2018), 1

Recruitment

More than 70% of runaways encounter a child predator within the first 48 hours of leaving their home. Due to an increase in internet access, there has been a drastic drop in the amount of time between a child running away or being thrown out of their home, and a trafficker finding them. Many young individuals access social media and leave easily accessible messages when they are leaving home. Traffickers are very alert to pick up these messages and “rescue” the victim by offering them love and security.

Induction

There are multiple ways that individuals become involved in trafficking situation. It may happen through friends, family members, buyers inducting them into commercial sex, or through traffickers disguised as boyfriends. It can begin as a romantic relationship with a young woman where a trafficker is eventually able to take over the will of their victim. The trafficker then offers the girl better living alternatives than her family home, shelter, or foster care.

Lies

Methods to lure victims include offering false employment, forced drug addiction, and promises of a better life. In addition, adolescents with low self-esteem may be at an increased risk of being recruited due to higher rates of social media use. That is because young adults experiencing emotional instability were more strategic in their on-line presentation to seek assurance from others.

CHAPTER 6

The Trafficker

It is also important to understand the trafficker: their background, motive, and driving force that makes them a predator and a criminal. Traffickers can hide as wolves in sheep's clothing. So, by learning about perpetrators, it offers additional insight into the world of trafficking and what to be aware of with regards to traffickers and their motives.

Most traffickers do not all wear flashy clothes or drive Cadillac's. Instead, they look just like everyone else and fit into society in everyday ways. Traffickers are often hiding in plain sight. They have jobs, families, friends, and often hold positions of authority within their community. While the majority of traffickers, predators, and pedophiles are male, many recruiters are also women. They may be mothers, aunts, and even grandmothers.

Profile of a Trafficker

Traffickers are often quite intelligent and very cunning. Many traffickers work together and form intricate networks to recruit. They are committed to finding multiple girls to traffic. Much of the alleged glamour of 'pimping' comes from the macho idea of having multiple women. Less than 3% of those trafficked in the United States were

victims of kidnapping. Instead, most victims know their trafficker. Many are family or family friends.

Traffickers are often politically connected and well-financed. Because of this, voices of former trafficked victims are often silenced by the power and control of the trafficker. Because prostitution and trafficking are so horrific, it is often not talked about or addressed. People feel uncomfortable, powerless, guilty, and re-traumatized by hearing about prostitution, so it is often silenced, giving the trafficker even more control and power

Aspects of the Trafficker

Traffickers excel at three things: manipulation, power, and control. They are knowledgeable about the necessary brain-washing techniques to secure their victims and are proud of being able to take ownership over others. Ironically, most every human trafficking victim has given consent to go with the trafficker because of the lies and manipulation that the trafficker is so skilled at utilizing.

Why would a girl go along with her abuser? Professionals in the field of child abuse, domestic violence, and commercial sexual exploitation label the process as seasoning, grooming and conditioning. Abusers use threats, isolation, and physical torture to dominate their victims.

Trafficker Characteristics

Traffickers often exhibit common characteristics. They are frequently older than female companions, vague about their profession, encourage victims to engage in illegal activities for the benefit of the trafficker, and promise the world (things too good to be

true) to their victims. Traffickers also have a unique way of making victims feel they are responsible for the trafficker's financial stability.

Traffickers as Victims

Traffickers themselves frequently come from backgrounds of victimization. Studies on traffickers find a history of troubled home life as children, including sexual abuse, child abuse, and substance use by the parents. This can often be difficult to accept, though, as people want to look at traffickers as "evil." But it is often a tortured home life or negative social environment that "creates" a trafficker. The majority of traffickers were victims themselves of sexual assault at an average age of 9.5 years old. This is an important analysis, because to alter human trafficking, the social conditions that create traffickers must be confronted.

Techniques

Sex traffickers are often hiding in plain view. They can hold positions of authority in communities and can be neighbors, friends, or even family members. While the majority of traffickers are men, it is also true that half of their recruiters are women and girls. Traffickers are generally very intelligent, as they know how to plot a course through the "deep web," which includes a sophisticated internet system. Traffickers can often be well connected in communities, which helps them to create a solid network of recruiters.

Traffickers use their skills to control a victim's sense of self, often completely controlling her identity. This strengthens the idea that they not only own the woman but have actually created a new individual specially for the purpose of prostitution.

Traffickers break women down physically, emotionally, and psychologically to turn the

victim into property. This can involve beating, raping, starving, and telling her she is good for nothing but sex. This solidifies the trafficker's ownership.

Grooming

A trafficker will initially establish a relationship with the victim before he turns her into a prostitute. He may become her boyfriend and even promise her marriage. It is all about trust. If the woman becomes dependent upon the trafficker, escape becomes difficult and dangerous. Often, the victim personally knows the trafficker. A study conducted by Arizona State University reflected that only 7.8% of victims who were trafficked were exploited by complete strangers.¹⁹³

Stages of Grooming

The grooming stages include ensnaring, creating dependence, taking control and total dominance. Ensnaring can be as simple as showing attention to a potential victim, buying gifts, or entering into a physical relationship. The creation of dependence is often a means of isolation. Traffickers work to separate victims from family and friends to increase dependence on the traffickers themselves. The control stage is the stage where the traffickers shift from being caring and supportive to possessive and controlling. This can happen through use of threats, violence or drugs to control and victim. The final stage is dominance, where the trafficker basically "owns" his victim. Once the victim becomes completely dependent, the trafficker begins "selling" the victim to others for substantial profit.

¹⁹³ Amy Joy, *Human Trafficking 101: Stories, Stats and Solutions* (Chicago: Self-published, 2019), 80

Bonding Process

The Stockholm Syndrome is a scenario where trafficking victims form a trauma bond to their captor. This survival technique alters a victim's thought processes, and creates a residual loyalty to their captor in trafficking situations.

Unless human behavior under conditions of captivity is understood, the emotional bond between those prostituted and the traffickers is difficult to comprehend. The terror created in the prostituted woman by the trafficker causes a sense of helplessness and dependence. This emotional bonding to an abuse under conditions of captivity has been described as the Stockholm Syndrome. Attitudes and behaviors which are part of this syndrome include: 1) intense gratefulness for small favors when the captor holds life and death power over the captor; 2) denial of the extent of violence and harm which the captor has inflicted or is obviously capable of inflicting; 3) hyper vigilance with respect to the pimp's needs and identification with the pimp's perspective on the world (an example of this was Patty Hearst's identification with her captor's ideology); 4) perception of those trying to assist in escape as enemies and perception of captors as friends; 5) extreme difficulty leaving one's captor, even after physical release has occurred. Paradoxically, women in prostitution may feel that they owe their lives to their trafficker.¹⁹⁴

Cause and Demand

Human trafficking exists because of demand. There are three parts that drive demand. They include the men who purchase the sexual favors, the traffickers who provide the victims, and the culture that allows sexual exploitation to happen. Other elements that open the door to human trafficking include gender inequalities, easy access for pornography, enhanced globalization, lack of accountability for traffickers (suppliers) and johns (buyers), and lack of services for victims once they are rescued.

¹⁹⁴ Melissa Farley, *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress* (Binghamton: Haworth Press, 2013), 23

Trafficking factors

Human trafficking is fueled by many different factors. The factors contributing towards trafficking include supply, demand, and profitability.

- Supply - trafficking victim fulfill the supply chain for the consumer
- Market demand - consumers are motivated by the demand for prostitution
- Profitability - traffickers reaps the profits of the exchange

Supply

Traffickers are the users and johns are the takers. Traffickers recognize that a great number of consumers will pay a substantial amount of money to satisfy their displaced desires. Together, users and takers victimize on the average of two children every minute globally. Pedophilia is the sexual attraction of adults to prepubescent children.

Market Demand

Traffickers are motivated by profits and consumers are motivated by demand for prostitution. It is an industry fueled by money and lust. Without demand, trafficking would not exist. About 99% of buyers are male and most are married with children. Consumers are usually educated and have an average age of 42.5 years old. About 10-20% of men in the United States have purchased sex in their lifetime.

Profitability

Sex traffickers are also usually involved in other types of criminal activity, such as drugs, fraud gambling, and guns. It is more lucrative than most other crimes and less risky. Sex trafficking yields a 70% profit for the trafficker. It is reported to be more

lucrative than most other crimes and less risky. Prosecution for sex trafficking is convoluted and often difficult to prove, so perpetrators are often hidden faces in a crowd.

The Internet

Human trafficking is an economic relationship. Traffickers are motivated mostly by the substantial profit of trafficking. They supply the link between supply and demand. The topic of demand is a cornerstone of abolitionism - if there were no demand for sexual commerce, then trafficking wouldn't exist. Pornography increases this need. Pornography often creates demand for women and children to be supplied for sexual use in human trafficking. It stimulates demand for buying victims for sexual objects in the same way it stimulates the viewer to act out on other victims.

The true extent to which men's experiences and behaviors are affected by the internet contributes to the escalation of exploitation and abuse of their victims. Technological innovations and unregulated use of the internet have created a global medium for trafficking. As global communication forums have increased, so has the human trafficking crime rate. In 2016, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported an 846% increase from 2010 to 2015 in reports of suspected child trafficking. This increase was found to be directly related to the increase in the use of the internet in selling children for sex.

Approximately 70% of individuals sold into sex trafficking are sold through online platforms, such as Craigslist or Facebook. Traffickers who once recruited in person are now turning to the internet for access to their potential victims. Many children on social media have no idea how to identify a predator and let their feelings take control.

Approximately, 83-95% of all teens in the United States have a Facebook account, which opens the door to predator victimization.

What Traffickers Seek

There are many ways that individuals become involved in trafficking, including through family, friends, buyers, and traffickers. Traffickers (captors) are always looking for victims to recruit. Recruiting can take place at detention centers, homeless shelters, schools, parks, social media, streets, or even churches. Traffickers are looking for vulnerable individuals and lie to them by offering them better living environments.

Victim Weaknesses

Traffickers know the types of human behavior that display vulnerabilities. They look for individuals with low self-esteem, lack of parental protection, and emotional neediness. These features can be uncovered online or in person. It takes only eight minutes for a trafficker to know if a person is a likely victim.

Dependence on Trafficker

Once victims are caught in the trafficking loop, it is difficult for them to leave. This can be because of emotional barriers, stigmatization, debt, threats of abuse, and gaps in services available for trafficking survivors. They often have nowhere to go. They have been dependent upon the trafficker for shelter, food, and housing. Unavailability of community support services creates a barrier, including lack of safe shelter and other resources. Finding housing employment, education, substance abuse rehabilitation and access to trauma-informed care are all barriers for the trafficking victim.

In a powerful passage in the book, *Girls Like Us*, the author explores why trafficking victims don't leave their abusers. This brought clarity and understanding to me about the invisible chains that "lock" trafficking victims to their trafficker:

"Why didn't you just leave?" In the first few years after I left the life of being a victim of trafficking, I was asked that question frequently. Embedded in the question were unspoken accusations: how could you be so weak/stupid? Was it because you deserved/liked it? In the beginning, I would constantly ask myself the same question, the accusatory subtext included. In truth, I didn't know why I stayed and I hated myself for doing so. Yet, as I began to work with strong, smart, brave girls who'd stayed with their abusers and who in spite of all the violence and exploitation continued to profess abject devotion - "But I love him" - I couldn't see them as weak or stupid. Instead I started to see a pattern with the girls I met. They were already bruised and vulnerable from the adults (parents, grandparents, uncles, family friends) in their lives when they met the adult men who would seize on their vulnerability like sharks smelling blood in the water. The same tactics would be used over and over again - kindness, violence, kindness, more violence. I watched helplessly as girls were jerked back from every attempt at independence by some invisible bungee cord; one end attached to the men they "loved" and the other end wrapped tightly around their necks.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Rachel Lloyd, *Girls Like Us* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 153.

CHAPTER 7

Awareness In the Hearts of the Faith-Focused Community

Helping faith-based entities find where God is at work and then joining Him there is the core of Christianity. Christ embraced friendship with women of questionable reputation during the days of His journey on earth, including the woman at the well (John 4:4-42) and the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50). So, it needs to be clarified to organizations of faith that the work of addressing the problems of human trafficking (even with the sexual connotations attached) is Jesus' work on earth. The Scriptures testify that if we desire to find where God is at work, one need only to identify those who are most vulnerable to exploitation.

Critical Role in the Fight

Faith-based entities can have a critical role in the anti-trafficking fight. As integral members of the community, faith communities are in a position to identify situations of trafficking, report suspected activity to authorities, and possibly even connect victims to life-saving resources. The Trafficking Resource Center has information that can guide interested individuals towards resources and connections that could help save lives.

Faith-based organizations often have a natural platform from which to contribute to many aspects of combating human trafficking. Organizations of faith share common values and an established infrastructure from already being engaged

in serving the community and meeting needs. Victims of trafficking cannot begin the process of healing unless they are “found.”

Ministry’s Focus

Ministry is not meant to be single-church or denomination driven. It’s focus needs to be cause-driven, compassion-led, and empathy-enhanced, and by embracing other organizations in many different areas of service, it will increase its impact in communities. The ministry may want to consider no longer being just about broad categories such as missions, evangelism, or discipleship, because the world has so many far reaching needs. Other consideration could be clean water, global hunger, and human trafficking. The gospel must always be the catalyst.

For the Christian, the key is to uncover the will of God for one’s life to find where God is at work and join Him there. The Scriptures testify that if one desires to find where God is at work, it is necessary to seek those who are most vulnerable to exploitation.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.” (1 Cor 1:3-5)

In essence, the believer does not have to bring the God of Justice to those who are hurting, because He is already there. So, it is up to the faith-based communities to become aware of the community needs and provide service to their community. By becoming aware of the other service organizations who serve trafficking victims, faith-

based organization can become a unified presence in the battle to fight against human trafficking, and their ability to serve their community needs will be amplified.

The Foundation of the Faith-Based Organization

The foundation of a faith-based organization's anti-trafficking focus should involve prevention. The definition and scope of prevention is broad, just as human trafficking is. It encompasses raising awareness and recognizing the need for intervention. While the scope of human trafficking can be far-ranging, it is important for faith-based leaders to understand that God has designed their organization to play a critical role in this fight. When the litany of issues that make people vulnerable to human trafficking is considered, the suffering of the victims will become a higher priority for faith-based leaders to embrace.

From Problem to Possibilities

Although often it is human nature to run from our weaknesses rather than acknowledge them, it is our own vulnerability that gives us the platform to serve other broken people. Faith-based missions are to serve. Helping leaders of faith to become more aware of the problem of human trafficking and then empowering them to recognize the broken individual is the answer. They can then begin to equip their members with the training necessary to develop an outreach program to become aware of trafficking victims in their local community.

Many community services are already available to offer support to victims, so the goal is not for leaders to recreate the wheel. Instead, the vision is for faith-based organizations to become aware of secular organizations that are already providing services and to ascertain the role they can fulfill in the fight against human trafficking.

Helping Christian communities begin to understand where to turn to fulfill the needs of the survivors will be a blessing that can help turn trafficking victims into trafficking survivors.

The Corporate Dream

I was blessed with the opportunity to volunteer one summer at The Dream Center in Los Angeles which changed my life. The Dream Center is also known as *the church that never sleeps*. Their philosophy states that in order to reach your community, you have to put yourself in other people's world. The opportunity to volunteer at this incredible organization first introduced me to the horrors of human trafficking; yet, also provided me with the gift of knowing we can truly make a difference in this world through love and compassion. All it requires, sometimes, is to open doors and our open hearts, which may be the blessing that's needed to give broken individuals a chance to achieve their dreams

In the book, *The Church That Never Sleeps*, there is a chapter that shares the story of the Corporate Dream. It reads as follows:

The Dream Center is all about helping people reach their dreams. Some people have never had a dream, and we help them find it. Others once had a dream but wasted their lives, so we help them dream again. Some people at our church need to believe in their dream and to be encouraged to stay on the path.

Whoever works at the Dream Center is a part of a corporate dream. We all have individual goals, but we have one main goal and we dream it together: we dream that there will be one area in the city of L.A. where everyone in the community will be saved. We dream of a community where children can walk the streets at night and not be fearful of being shot. Our desire is that this community will be the safest in L.A. We have a dream that thousands of people are going out from the church every day, serving people, and spreading home abroad. We dream of a community of revival, just like that in the book of Acts. Then people from all over the world can look at it and truly know that God can transform any community with willing people ready to serve Him. We might not

be a perfect bunch of people, but we believe that God can bless the labors of our hands and sincere hearts.

Wouldn't it be awesome to see the churches of America become the center of life and activity in our communities? We are doing all that we can to make the church the focal point of people's lives. That is why we do all that we do to reach out.

Together, we work toward that dream with all of our hearts. We have dreams that will last us the rest of our lives. But do we worry? No, because God has already heard our requests and He is working things out according to His time.¹⁹⁶

Helping others find their dreams is a passion within so many of us. Yet, it can be as simple as meeting people where they are at - and then journeying with them as they uncover their own personal dream. God has the plan ... we just need to be His hands and feet to fulfill it.

*Time to turn hell into Heaven. Find a purpose in this evil.
I am the face of trafficking. An age-old horror that has reigned too long.
Raise an army. See the reality. Save our children.*

*I have had many faces. Forced to be many people.
Finding myself has been a long journey. A chilling road.
I need to know that little girl again. Find and heal her wounds.
Nurture strength from within. From Above.¹⁹⁷*

¹⁹⁶ Matthew Barnett, *The Church That Never Sleeps* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000): 183.

¹⁹⁷ Flores, *The Slave Across the Street*, 199.

CHAPTER 8

Christian Response to Help Heal the Pain

For faith-focused individuals to be able to help to change the direction of human sex trafficking, leaders of faith are in a position to encourage these three steps:

- **Engage** their people to step up to the challenge of embracing the fight against trafficking
- **Equip** their followers with the skills of awareness of potential victims of trafficking
- **Empower** the Christian community to take the necessary steps to contact authorities with their suspicions.

Hidden Problem

Since trafficking victims are often reluctant to identify themselves, rarely do victims come forward for help. Victims are often difficult to find and to reach. Many trafficking victims are taught to fear law enforcement; often because of past negative experiences they have either witnessed or experienced themselves. Also, trafficking victims fear the retribution by their traffickers. Awareness is the key to uncovering these individuals if a trafficking situation is suspected. But most people don't know how to spot a trafficking victim or whom to report a suspected trafficking situation to.

Creating Awareness

The problem is that we as a community cannot help the trafficking victim unless we understand and become aware of who the victims are. Learning to identify the victim is the first step towards helping the trafficked individual become a survivor. Sexual human trafficking is a camouflaged crime. It is difficult to identify victims, as they are often kept behind closed doors by their captor.

Matthew 5:16 explores: “In the same way [as Christ], let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.” By helping the faith community embrace the fight to protect the innocent victims by equipping and empowering them with the knowledge needed to make a difference, the light can shine through them to help in the fight against human trafficking.

Next Steps Toward Prevention

For a long time, it seemed survivors were invisible. They were hidden where people couldn't see them and had no voice. The laws regarding human trafficking are complex, statistics are frightening, and the battle to fight trafficking is extensive. The United States Department of State describes prevention efforts as including education and awareness, targeted outreach to vulnerable populations, and legislation to address known problem areas.

Organizations and individuals should have one core vision: deliverance of victims. The consequences of trafficking for the victims are devastating. Trafficked children are deprived of obtaining an education at a crucial age and suffer psychological

scars. Trafficked women are often deprived of the opportunity for marriage and children. Families are traumatized and experience profound loss.

Locations for Potential Victims

Victims are all around us. The top sex trafficking industries include prostitution in hotels or the street, brothels, and escort services. Most prevalent child trafficking industries are prostitution, peddling rings, pornography, escort service, traveling sales crew, and the restaurant/food industry. Being aware of the surroundings and attune to warning signs will help to create awareness and recognition.

Potential victims can often be found in low-income neighborhoods, schools, shopping malls, and even churches. A life of vulnerability opens the door to a potential trafficking scenario. Individuals who have been exposed to childhood trauma, neglect, homelessness, abuse, or poverty are targets for traffickers, so often lower income or at-risk areas in our communities are key locations for trafficking situations.

The magnitude of destruction that trafficking brings with it for the victim is immeasurable. Victims carry the pain and stigma with them throughout their lives. Healing can come only through recognizing that they were “victims” and that the circumstances were not their fault. Helping victims get to this point of acceptance is a long process of embracing this truth.

Victim Warning Signs

There are warning signs that indicate that an individual may possibly be a victim of human trafficking. These signs may include:

- Signs of abuse such as bruises, cuts, or burn marks

- Unexplained absences from work or school
- Less appropriate dress or sexualize behavior
- Withdrawn, depressed or anxious
- Brags about making money or displays expensive clothes or jewelry¹⁹⁸
- Often there is a controlling figure nearby that is calling the shots

Invisible Chains

Commonly, traffickers will build a relationship with the victim in efforts to understand their dreams and create emotional attachment. They will then isolate the victim from family and friends followed by manipulation and use of force. Victims become the trafficker's property and it is made clear that he is in control.

Trafficking victims are not free to leave or come and go as they wish. They are usually unpaid or paid through tips. They are usually recruited through false promises and can work excessively long hours late into the night. They are often fearful, avoid eye contact, paranoid, and anxious around police or people of authority.

Physical and Mental Signs of Trafficking

Trafficking victims may also show physical signs of abuse or neglect. They may be malnourished and show signs of poor hygiene. Victims often may have signs of unexplained bruising, scars or burn marks. Marks around their wrists, ankles, and neck could suggest that the victim has been restrained or controlled through physical force. They may also exhibit tattoos associated with sex trafficking and wear inappropriate or ill-fitting clothing.

Trafficking victims also may show psychological signs of abuse. They often are confused about where they are at and display a lost sense of time. Their stories are inconsistent, and they may be unable to clarify where they live or what their address is. They may appear anxious or present timid behavior. They also often shut down attempts at conversation or make eye contact.

Substance Abuse and Intimidation

Signs of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol can also be a signal of trafficking victims. Someone who has been drugged may lack coordination, have limited balance, or may have a difficult time keeping their head up and eyes open. There may be signs of needle marks and dilated pupils.

Victims may reflect heightened fear because of a controlling presence nearby. Traffickers usually stay close by and create an anxious presence for their victim. The trafficker may also portray himself as an uncle, boyfriend, or a father figure to distract questions about their relationship.

What To Do If Trafficking is Suspected

Resist the urge to get involved in the situation or to interfere with a potential trafficking scenario. Often, our desire is to help the victim on the spot, but by doing so, you are putting your own safety at risk. Do not approach an individual since the trafficker may be nearby or watching. It can be frightening to witness a potential trafficking situation but remember to remain calm and avoid drawing attention to yourself.

If the potential victim is alone and you feel it is safe to do so, start by asking the victim some pertinent questions to try to understand the scenario. Some questions you could pose are:

- Can you come and go as you please?
- Have you been hurt or threatened if you try to leave?
- What is your relationship to the person you are with?
- Where do you live, eat, and sleep?
- Do you have any family or friends that you would like me to contact?

Communicate with them that you are concerned and care about their safety through your empathy and compassion towards the potential victim. Stress that abuse is never their fault and that they do not deserve to live a life being restricted from family and friends. It is not a time for judgment or for condescending values. Instead, it is a time to let the victim know they are loved and cherished as individuals; no matter what their life experiences have been.

Awareness Notes

Take mental notes of all that you see if you suspect a trafficking situation. Some awareness notes may include:

- The physical features of the victim, including hair and eye color, size structure and clothing
- Physical features of the trafficker (if sighted)
- Visible factors such as tattoos, scars, or marks of abuse on victim
- Mental limitations may include fear of questions, distrust, or anxious behavior
- Car make and model, license plate, and color of vehicle

Reach Out for Help

Now is your time to act! Anyone who suspects human trafficking must reach out to authorities as soon as possible. Some of the best resources are:

- Call your local police department (911 in most communities) and provide the information you have about the potential trafficking scenario you witnessed
- Report your suspicion to the National Human Trafficking Hotline by phone: (888) 373-7888 or by text: 233733 (Text “HELP” or “INFO”)
- Visit: <https://traffickingresourcecenter.org> for additional information on resources available in your community

By becoming aware of the problem of human trafficking and allowing this awareness to open our eyes to potential trafficking activities, it is the first step in helping the victim break the chains that bind them. There are limitless possibilities that can be used for awareness outreach. By being aware of our surroundings and watching for potential scenarios of trafficking is a crucial tool in the fight against the crime. Street outreach is an example of working together to make a difference by forming small groups of individuals and actually integrate into areas where trafficking activities are more prevalent. In addition, there is the opportunity to learn more through the National Trafficking Center website: <https://traffickingresourcecenter.org> for additional information on resources available in your community.

Call to Action for Faith-Focused Organizations

Why should anti-human sex trafficking become a focus for the faith community? Because loving those who are suffering is what Christianity is all about. “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). It’s time to carry the burdens of trafficking victims. Consider these ten courses of action to help bring Light into the darkness for the victims of sex trafficking.

Educate

Learn all you can about human sex trafficking and then share the facts with others. Uncover how trafficking affects your community through resources provided on the National Human Trafficking website and other sources. Then, seek ways to educate your community on how to:

- Identify victims on the streets
- Respond to potential trafficking scenarios
- Prevention by hosting experts on trafficking
- Encourage survivors to share their stories and testimonies
- Hold events to share films about trafficking and discuss actions to take

Prevent

Faith communities are already equipped to support prevention because they are often already working with the source of the situation that open the door for sex trafficking: poverty, domestic abuse, mental illness, runaway youth, and so many other issues in our communities. Serving these areas of needs is an important step towards prevention.

Report

We must all take on the role of “mandatory reporters” if we become aware of a potential human sex trafficking situation. If you believe you have information about a trafficking happening, immediately call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888.373.7888. Trained volunteers are available 24/7 to answer your call. All calls are confidential and you will remain anonymous. Promote this contact number by posting it and including it in your community news.

Advocate

Be an advocate for stronger legislation in your local communities and throughout your state. Contact your legislators and encourage them to support legislation that will help victims and enhance punishment against traffickers. Resources are necessary to combat human trafficking at local, state, and federal levels.

Partner

It is not necessary to recreate the wheel, since there are many organizations already involved in the fight against trafficking. Collaboration of services are needed to cover the large scope of the many facets of trafficking. Every state in the nation has trafficking organizations and initiatives already in place. Join an interfaith coalition or a local task force to strengthen your potential towards making a difference. Partner with civic organizations or anti-trafficking entities already fighting the battle. You could also start your own initiative and invite others to join you.

Volunteer

Encourage others within your faith community to volunteer their talents and their time to support local anti-trafficking initiatives. There are unlimited opportunities to give

back. Your skills can be the asset that is needed to complete the picture for a trafficking victim. Offer time to tutor, serve as a mentor, help teach new skills to survivors, offer rides for necessary appointments, provide daycare within your facility to children of former trafficking victims, and so many more options to offer those who so desperately need your time and talents.

Welcome

Welcome trafficking survivors into your faith organization. It does not matter what their history is; they are broken individuals that need a healing dose of faith and love. Survivors are in desperate need of a support system that they can lean and depend upon. Avoid judgment and do not try to counsel. Instead, provide an environment of unconditional love, listen to their stories if they choose to share, and open your facility as a safe harbor, providing resources that may include education, daycare, and specialized services provided by the individuals who make up your organization. Another option is to collect clothes, coats, and other necessities to support the many needs of these hurting individuals.

Donate Services

Help your organization to uncover services that they could offer to trafficking victims. Each of their members is skilled in some level or working for a business that may be able to help support victims of trafficking. Some ideas include:

- Beauticians could provide special hair care services as well as make up and nail care, which offers the gift of personal care for broken survivors.
- Handymen and builders can help repair and maintain safe houses and victim's new home needs.

- Attorneys could offer legal services while accountants may offer tax and financial services.
- Schools and universities can provide education and vocational training to help victims get a new start in life.
- Health care providers may be able to assist victims with their many physical needs while mental health workers could provide support for their mental needs by helping to empower their strengths to strive for a brighter future.

Help Through Funding

Funds and resources are needed for organizations to continue to support anti-trafficking initiatives. Hold a special collection to donate to local and national organizations who are already on the battlefield in the fight against trafficking.

Purchase

Look for organizations that are helping victims of trafficking by selling their hand-made products. One such entity, Women At Risk, Inc., employs trafficking survivors to teach them the trade of jewelry making. Then, they sell the jewelry to purchasers and utilize the money to build Safe Houses for survivors.

Reaching Outside Your Doors

Create a Donation Drive

Spread awareness by hosting a donation drive and inviting the public. You could create a Giving Tree, so people could choose a special ornament with needs for a trafficking victim. In addition, you could hold a donation drive to support your endeavor

to fight trafficking or a local entity that is already established to support anti-trafficking initiatives.

Host an Outreach Event

Sponsor a seasonal event to support the battle against trafficking. An event could be informational and inspiring to involve others in your initiative. Offer parents training geared towards prevention or various respite events for victims or at-risk individuals throughout the year.

Wrap Around Your Community

The goal is to serve as the hands and feet of God by equipping the community with information and resources and offering the opportunity to support at-risk families within your local community. Reach out to neighborhoods that are struggling and offer a helping hand. Provide needed resources to at-risk children in your community and help them strengthen their faith and trust in a God of mercy and grace. Build a bridge between the hurting and your organization where broken individuals can come and receive the unconditional love they crave so desperately.

While accepting that shattered lives surround us, too often we give in to the false notion that one person can't really make a huge difference in such a messed up world. This weak rationalization, most likely nothing more than a cover-up for our selfish ways, fashions the blinders that protect our eyes and keep our hands clean. As long as we are convinced that "somebody like me" can't really do anything to turn the tide, we can continue to exist in our self-made bubbles of comfort and ignore God's beating heart. Yet throughout history, in the dark night of need, God awakens ordinary people to the torrent of His love, shattering the silence and fueling in their hearts an unquenchable desire to spread the love they've found in the broke and discarded.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Mary Frances Bowley, *The White Umbrella* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012): 11.

CHAPTER 9

The Prayer Center: Changing Lives of the Broken

Serving as the Executive Director of the Prayer Center was an experience that I will never forget. The memories of serving that organization was a gift to me - as we reached out to be a blessing for the broken, the hurting, and the disillusioned individuals within our city. Although I will share various aspects of how this small, non-profit organization served the community, my goal is to share the program we developed to help fight the war against human trafficking. But first, let me introduce you to the Prayer Center and its mission.

When I first started at the Prayer Center, my board had been working for nearly a year on a mission plan for their new venture. They searched through Google for answers, they studied manuals on how to design a mission plan, and they met monthly to discuss what the Prayer Center would mean to the community. As I sat there and listened, I finally interjected: why not let the community decide?

After much confusion by the board, I introduced that we should just meet individuals at our door with the slogan: how can I serve you today? From there, our

mission will be designed by the needs of the community. Although I didn't have buy-in from most of the board, we agreed to give it a try. And that is how the Prayer Center presented itself to the community.

With a location in the downtown area and with poverty at an all time high, I knew the best way to draw people in was by offering food. So, I went on a venture to get donations. Within a few weeks, I had many area restaurants donating left over breads, donuts, bagels, and coffee. So, with a sign in the front of our building offering free food, the door started opening with guests visiting our center.

With each guest that came through our door, we greeted them with: "how can I serve you?" There were many community needs but the story I wish to tell is about Lila. Lila considered herself a "lady of the evening" (which, of course, is a glorified term for prostitute). Yet, Lila could not be considered a prostitute because she was 17 when we met. And no one under the age of 18 can be considered a prostitute but, instead, they are a victim of human trafficking.

Just like everyone else who came through our doors, I greeted Lila with a bright and cheery, "how can we serve you today?" Each person had a different need. Some needed medical assistance and we made connections with local medical center to provide services. Some needed transportation and we were able to get free bus passes for those in need. Others requested assistance with legal matters and we were able to set up appointments with Legal Aid to provide free services for them. And some just needed food and companionship - and we were there with food items, warm hearts to listen, and prayer because we know God always has a way.

But Lila was different. Lila was a girl who had been badly broken by a system who had failed her. As I listened to her story, I realized she was a little lost girl who needed a way out. Her story is convoluted but what Lila brought to us through her brokenness was a new vision of how we could make a difference in the world of human sex trafficking.

Lila shared a story that started when she was a child. She noted that her parents were loving and caring, but very naive. It began with her cousins playing “doctor” behind closed doors. Her cousins were adopted and although they were only a few years older than her, their experiences from their past proved to hold a dark secret. Because they had been sexually abused when they were toddlers, the abuse embedded into their DNA. And Lila became the target of the sexual abuse that escaped from these confused boys.

Without the knowledge of her parents or grandparents, Lila was a victim of sexual abuse for over three years. Not understanding and realizing it was not the way it should be, Lila never told a soul about her abuse. As the years went on, though, the abuse always comes out, one way or another. So, cutting started, because as she said, the physical pain was nearly as bad as the mental. Then, came the marijuana which then became cocaine and soon led to heroin. To support her habit, Lila’s boyfriend started introducing her to his friends, who were willing to pay for the services she provided. Soon, Lila was in a vicious cycle that she didn’t know how to get out of.

So, she entered the doors of the Prayer Center and opened a new world at the center that we were not familiar with. But, step by step, we began to put pieces of the puzzle in place for Lila, which opened the door for us to serve in a world that we were clueless about - the world of human sex trafficking.

First, we had to get Lila out of the location she was at. Helping her understand that a “boyfriend” would never sell her to friends, we were able to get her set up in an apartment that was available above our center. By providing food, clothing, and shelter, we were offering a first step for Lila. Next came a detox program. Fortunately, local community programs were available that cover the cost of detox, rehab, and mental health combined with Lila’s medicaid, which we were able to get established for her. Through the unconditional love and compassion shared with her through our center, and continual prayer over Lila by our staff, volunteers, and even other people we had served along our journey at the Prayer Center, Lila began to find healing through the clouds of despair and disillusionment.

Being a victim of human sex trafficking takes many facets of healing. The first step was helping Lila to acknowledge that she truly was a victim and this was not her fault. The next step was helping her find compassion for herself and learning to trust others when they offer support. Trust is not something that comes easily for a trafficking victim. As Lila began to find healing, she reached out to other girls who she had met along her journey who were also in a trafficking situation (even though they didn’t recognize it as that). Soon, through God’s mercy and grace, we were able to begin to help put the puzzle pieces together for other girls who were being trafficked. Our gifts to them brought gifts back to us as a center. Each case was different and each carried with it an element of heartbreak - and then victory. Satan was not in charge; God was. And the evilness that once owned these girls became the empowerment they needed to make a change. With each mess in life, God provides a message. For these girls, the message was the opportunity to break the chains of slavery and gain strength through the many

blessings that were being offered to them. Not all chose to accept the blessings but for those that did, the reward was survivor hood and victory over slavery.

Lila went on to become a mentor for the many girls we reached out to. Although no one willingly walked through our doors without our reach-out to them, they were more willing to open their hearts to a “survivor” who has been where they are. Without Lila co-piloting with Christ in the driver’s seat of this endeavor, we would not have been successful in this undertaking. But it was through the belief that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” that gave Lila the ability to heal and to reach out to others to break the chains that bound them.

CHAPTER 10

Facts about Human Sex Trafficking

What is sex trafficking?

The United States Department of health and Human Services defines sex trafficking as commercial sex act that is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 year of age.²⁰⁰

How do traffickers recruit their victims?

Traffickers prey upon a person's weaknesses. They get into people's minds and bully, threaten, manipulate, and hurt their victims. They are void of moral or ethical compass. They seek a girl who needs love and is lonely, naive, starved for attention, and trusting. Then, they shower her with gifts and sweet talk - and the trap is set.²⁰¹

At what age are girls being recruited for trafficking?

²⁰⁰ Theresa Flores, *The Slave Across the Street* (Boise: Ampelon Publishing, 2019), 180.

²⁰¹ Flores, *The Slave Across the Street*, 190.

The typical age of entry for girls being sold for sex is middle school - from about 11-14 years of age. Many are even much younger than this.²⁰² The average age of entry into the sex trade industry is 13.5 years of age.

Describe the average buyer (john).

They are mostly men (99%) who are married and have children of their own. They are usually of average IQ and many are college-educated. They range in age from 18-89 with the average age of 42.5. They encompass every profession, social class, and all areas of society.²⁰³

Why don't victims leave when they have the chance?

There are multiple factors that prevent victims from leaving trafficking situations, including abuse, stigmatization, debt bondage, cultural beliefs, and gaps in available services for survivors. Emotional barriers such as low self worth and insecurity can be a major barrier. Love for the trafficker can also prevent girls from leaving.²⁰⁴

If a minor "chooses" involvement in the commercial sex industry, is she is prostitute?

All minors (under the age of 18) involved in any form of commercial sex are considered victims, not prostitutes. And anyone who purchases sex involving a minor is

²⁰² Linda Smith, *Invading the Darkness* (Shared Hope International, 2018), 152.

²⁰³ Smith, *Invading the Darkness*, 153-154.

²⁰⁴ Andrea Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 107.

engaging is statutory rape and in many states, is also viewed as a trafficker. A “pimp” who sells a minor is legally recognized as a sex trafficker.²⁰⁵

Are most trafficking victims female?

80% of trafficking victims are female while over 50% are minors (under the age of 18). Human trafficking is the only area of transnational crime in which women are significantly represented - as victims, perpetrators, and activists seeking to combat the crime.²⁰⁶

Does trafficking exist throughout the nation?

Trafficking exists in every state in the U.S. Victims of trafficking are exploited in rural, urban, and suburban communities and along the nation’s highways. Americans also engage in trafficking by traveling to poorer countries to engage in sex tourism.²⁰⁷

Does childhood abuse play a factor within trafficking victims?

It is well established that sexual abuse in childhood is a precondition for prostitution. Studies reveal that become 55% - 90% of prostituted women have histories of childhood sexual abuse. In addition, the prime targets for prostitution are children and young women barely out of childhood.²⁰⁸

What is Stockholm Syndrome?

²⁰⁵ Nichols, *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.*, 10.

²⁰⁶ Louise Shelley, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2018), 16.

²⁰⁷ Shelley, *Human Trafficking*, 233.

²⁰⁸ Melissa Farley, *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress* (Binghamton: Haworth Press, 2013), 173.

This is an emotional bonding to an abuser under conditions of captivity. Attitudes and behaviors include: (1) intense gratefulness for small favors when the captor holds life and death power over the captor; (2) denial of the extent of violence and harm which the captor has inflicted; (3) taking on the pimp's perspective of the world and being extra attentive to his needs; (4) perceiving those on the outside who try to help as enemies, (5) extreme difficulty leaving the captor, even after physical restraints have been broken.²⁰⁹

Who are the most vulnerable victims of trafficking?

Runaways, throwaways (kids who have been kicked out of their parent's home), foster care, and previously sexually abused children are among the most vulnerable victims. More than 70% of runaways encounter a child predator within the first 48 hours of leaving home.²¹⁰

Does social media play a significant role in the process of recruiting victims?

Approximately 70% of individuals sold into sex trafficking are sold through online platforms like Craigslist. One in five children ages 10-17 report that they have been approached by an online predator. The internet gives traffickers easy access to victims for recruitment and grooming.²¹¹

Pimp or trafficker - what is the difference?

A pimp is always a trafficker but a trafficker is not always a pimp. Basically, pimps sell sex. A trafficker that supplies human beings for labor, organs, child soldiers,

²⁰⁹ Farley, *Prostitution*, 23.

²¹⁰ Amy Joy, *Human Trafficking 101: Stories, Stats, and Solutions* (Independently Published, 2019), 54.

²¹¹ Joy, *Human Trafficking 101*, 67.

or adoptions is trafficking person but not necessarily selling sex. Traffickers use victims for money in whatever capacity serves them best.²¹²

How often are children exploited?

A child is exploited somewhere in the world every 26 seconds. Thirteen million children are trafficked worldwide and 300,00 children are trafficked in the U.S. each year. Missing children and runaways are often the most vulnerable.²¹³

Why is sex trafficking on the rise?

Traffickers have discovered that, unlike drugs or weapons, the same person can be sold over and over again in the sex trade. Human traffickers profit by turning dreams into nightmares for their victims. There is also low risk of arrest for traffickers.²¹⁴

Why does trafficking exist?

Trafficking exists because of demand. If there wasn't demand by "johns" wanting to purchase sex, there would be no trafficking. Online sex adds allows the buyer many choices. They can chose based on age, skin color, or particular fetishes. As long as people are sold like a commodity for sexual services and buyers continue to search those adds, the demand for human beings will continue.²¹⁵

How would Jesus view sex trafficking?

²¹² Theresa Flores and Peggy Sue Wells, *Slavery In the Land of the Free* (Boise: Ampelton Publishing, 2016), 52.

²¹³ Flores and Wells, *Slavery in the Land of the Free*, 45.

²¹⁴ Nita Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America and What We Can Do To Stop It*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 120.

²¹⁵ Belles, *In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America*, 37.

Jesus loved those whom the rest of society had cast out as lowlifes. He respected women who others looked down upon. Jesus knew how to love intentionally. Jesus' life and ministry wasn't just talking about love, or talking about how to live; He intentionally lived love in His daily encounters and embraced those who were hurting.²¹⁶

Is praying for others enough?

James 2:13 says, "Mercy triumphs over judgment." It goes on to explain that faith is made complete by what we do. James isn't saying that faith isn't important, he is just saying that faith without works is hypocritical. Protecting those who need to be protected, like those who are being trafficked, is near to the heart of God.²¹⁷

Is sex trafficking considered organized crime?

Organized crime consists of groups or operations run by criminals with the purpose of generating a monetary profit. The commercial sexual exploitation of women and children is a multi-billion dollar industry that involved organized criminal groups in every continent and every nation. It is the second most lucrative crime, next to weapons and drugs.²¹⁸

Can individuals heal after being sex trafficked?

Victims of sex trafficking and forced prostitution have typically been isolated from their families, friends, and home communities. They have suffered physical and sexual abuse, medical problems, and the extreme trauma associated with living in

²¹⁶ Nita Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective on Human Trafficking in the United States* (Xulon Press, 2011), 40.

²¹⁷ Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective*, 40.

²¹⁸ Daniel Walker, *God in a Brothel* (Downers Grove: IV Press, 2011), 112.

slavery. The healing journey is usually intense and requires extensive professional aftercare.²¹⁹

Are there different kinds of traffickers (pimps)?

Guerrilla pimps are known for their violence and brutality. Sneaker pimps are considered low-rent pimps at the bottom of the food chain. There are pimps who are sophisticated and pimps who are sociopaths. There are also pimps who simply follow the cultural belief that we all do what we have to do to survive. Yet, anyone who makes money off the commercial sexual exploitation of someone else is pimping them, which is a sex crime.²²⁰

How does the healing process begin?

Groups and workshops alone can't support the healing that girls need. People connect to people, not programs. The human need for appropriate, unconditional love to help with healing is necessary. Healing generally doesn't come from a specific type of clinical therapy or a certain activity, but it comes from trust, connection, and the feeling that they are truly loved.²²¹

²¹⁹ Walker, *God in a Brothel*, 163.

²²⁰ Rachel Lloyd, *Girls Like Us* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 94.

²²¹ Lloyd, *Girls Like Us*, 23.

CHAPTER 11

Testimonials from Trafficking Victims

Learning the stories from victims themselves shares a powerful reflection of what victims experience. I am quoting various passages from different books I have read, which I felt reflected what it is that victims often experience in the trafficking world. Each victim's story is similar, yet unique. Each story holds a powerful message...

I'm not sure why Danielle's story particularly got to me that night. After all, this is what I do. I've spent the last thirteen years of my life working with girls just like Danielle, girls who have been bought and sold. I don't cry after every girl I meet, nor do I drink several glasses of wine after every tough story. Over the years, I've learned to develop some distance, a basic ability to hear, to absorb varying levels of horrific detail without taking it all home with me every night. As any cop, emergency workers, or first-responder will tell you, sometimes something unexpectedly sneaks in, getting through the wall that you've so carefully constructed in order to stay sane. Perhaps what got to me was the ease with which men had been able to buy Danielle, right there on their laptops. No lurking about in the streets, no curb-crawling in shady areas. They bought sex online of a child like they were paying a bill, ordering a pair of shoes, booking a vacation. Perhaps it was the insidious nature of her recruitment, the fact that she never stood a chance. A foster care kid, bounced from place to place, with two "older" sisters who had also been trafficked. Or was it the cheap necklace that she so lovingly fondled and the realization of how easy it had been for this adult man to

lure her, to seduce her, to become her “boyfriend.” Maybe it was the fact that just a month before I had met her, the New York State Senate had refused to pass a bill that would have created services and support for girls just like her, who were normally treated as criminals, not victims. Perhaps what cracked my armor that night was her age. Even though I frequently recited the statistic that the estimated median age of entry into the commercial sex industry was between twelve and fourteen years old and had worked with lots of very young girls over the years, there was something about her eleven-year-old puppy fat, her love of roller coaster rides, that shook me. Ultimately, it was all of it. Meeting Danielle that night was a harsh reminder of how much work there was still to do.

Rachel Lloyd, *Girls Like Us* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 1.

For most of my life, I had a dark, depressing secret. I believed the lie that I had liked the sexual abuse I had experienced as a youth, that the incestuous relationship I had experienced with my father was consensual. The guilt and shame of that lie! It took years before I found the courage to say the words out loud to anyone. I believed I as alone in it because, of course, sexual abuse was hated by every other victim. I kept the secret to myself; I would have preferred to die rather than admit I had evil traits.

Roxanne Fawley, *But I Liked It...and Other Lies* (Grand Rapids: 5 Fold, 2014), 11.

Kimmie introduced me to the life of prostitution, but she didn’t know what she was getting herself, or me, into. She looked at being a high-class call girl from the perspective of what she was gaining. Her boyfriend showered her with diamonds. He draped her in a designer wardrobe. He bought her a family car. So what if she turned a few tricks at night? During the day she was sipping a cocktail under sweeping palm trees and enjoying the perks of making insane money, sometimes even just for performing the simple act of taking off her clothes. (Kimmie never considered her boyfriend a trafficker, because she believed he was completely in love with her.)

Annie Lobert, *Fallen* (Franklin: Worthy Books, 2015), 26.

At the age of 11, Maria had been casually raped and discarded by a group of men in her local neighborhood in one of the many squalid barrios of Honduras. Maria became pregnant as a result, and after she had her baby, she was, like any mother, desperate to find a way to support her child. Sold to a brothel by a group of traffickers who had ensnared her at the border, Maria was told she now had to pay off her purchase price or debt before she could be free. With threats of further rape and beatings hanging over her head, Maria did her best to sell her small body to the many locals, tourists and miscreants who found their way onto her dance floor.

Daniel Walker, *God in a Brothel* (Downers Grove: IV Press, 2011), 29.

My mom was a single parent and worked long hours, so she would take us to our grandmother's (her former foster mother), who ran a daycare there. While the rest of the children went down for naps, my uncle would take me into the woods to his treehouse and rape me. One day when we arrived, there was someone else waiting by the treehouse. I was confused and thought maybe we were not going up there that day. I was wrong. This other man forced me up the ladder with him while my uncle waited below. The man made me drink a beer he had in his hand, saying it would make it earlier and that it would make me feel good. He poured it into my mouth, and I had no choice but to swallow. I hated it, it didn't make me feel good at all, but made me sick to my stomach. He came in close and started to undress me. He smelled like the disgusting beer he forced down my throat. As I moved away and said no, my uncle climbed up and told me I had to do what I was told. I cooperated with the man, and all the other men after that.

Jennifer Castle, *A Healing Awakened* (Middletown: Legacy Sparrow LLC, 2018), 21.

By the time I was twelve years old, the chaos and pain from my childhood were too much. I couldn't take it anymore. I was sure there had to be something better outside the walls of my home. Suddenly, I was alone. I had no food and no place to sleep. But it wasn't long before I met the nicest guy. The man's name was Michael. He wore a heavy jacket and a blue stocking cap and spoke in a soft voice. "Sheila, you don't seem like the other girls I see on the street," he said. "You're pretty and seem really smart. How did you end up out here?" Michael took me to a fancy townhome. Soon after, the front door opened, and three men staggered in. They pulled off my clothes and then raped me repeatedly.' After they left, I got the courage to get my clothes and start moving. I had to get out of there, get back to the streets. But when I tried to open the door, nothing happened. I realized it was locked from the other side. I was trapped.

Mary Frances Bowley, *The White Umbrella* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 22.

Looking back, I now know I was chosen even before I was talked to by my recruiter. I'm sure she spotted the longing in my eyes and the loneliness that I projected out of my hurts and agony. As I would learn later, predators watch their victims before they target them. They especially seek lonely and abused children who display their vulnerability by the way they talk, their clothes, their general demeanor, or the helplessness in their eyes. Predators sense the child's lack of family support and their susceptibility.

Annie Lobert, *Stolen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2014), 19.

Night after night, Theresa experience sexual abuse and torture until she passed out. The young teen never knew where she was taken, the address, or what part of town she was in. No one asked her name, age, or why she was there. She was

raped by hundreds of cruel men, but no one ever asked if she needed help. She couldn't go home until they were finished with her. She was a slave.

Theresa Flores and Peggy Sue Wells, *Slavery in the Land of the Free* (Boise: Ampelon, 2016), 29.

Why tell my story now? Because if I had read of a case like mine, where the victim thought she enjoyed and even sought abuse, I might have had the courage to tell my counselors I held the same belief. I might have been spared years of self-torture caused by the lies; instead I considered myself unusual, evil, and undeserving of any help. I felt exempt from every offer of comfort because I never believed I was a true victim. After all, I had sometimes been so willing. I had always received pleasure, not pain, from the hand of my sexual abuser. Because of beliefs like these, I concluded I was wicked, with a sick and twisted character.

Roxanne Farley, *But I Liked It...and Other Lies* (Grand Rapids: 5 Fold, 2014), 11.

This book is about the journey of grace that has allowed me to heal and trust again, and about how the Lord removed my shame [of being a sex trafficking victim]. This healing has been especially important from the further wounds of unknowing stranger - people who question how this could truly be "slavery," who comment that I must have had an option and therefore it could not be slavery. I suppose I was seeking validation again when I allowed their comments to pierce me. Rejection and shame are emotions that people with post-traumatic syndrome disorder (PTSD) live with daily, embedded deep within their soul.

Theresa Flores, *The Slave Across the Street* (Boise: Ampelon Publishing, 2019), 7.

These children that are being trafficked have been abused, raped and manipulated into believing this is all their idea, that this is a choice they are making. And yet our society have labeled them "willing participants in a victimless crime." What a tragedy. These are children being use in the most horrific ways to make money for pimps, who they consider their "boyfriends," with whom they believe they are in love. Considering the brainwashing and sexual abuse these girls have experienced at the hands of their pimps, it is a wonder they have survived.

Nita Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective on Human Trafficking in the United States* (Xulon Press, 2011), 106.

Trafficking is real. It is here in my town, and it happened to me. I thought I was choosing a new life. The truth was, I had been chosen, targeted, and was nearly lured into a life of being forever damaged, if I escaped with my life at all ... it seems overwhelming to fight against criminals who are so organized and focused on luring victims... but it is worth the fight.

Linda Smith, *Invading the Darkness* (Shared Hope International, 2018), 176.

It was during these times - the threats, the beatings, the criticizing - that I wish I could have left. I just didn't have enough strength, posture, guts, sense, whatever you want to call it, to run from the battlefield. I could not figure out how to escape the web of abuse, but knew I needed to. I began to think, to plan, to figure out how I could slip away seamlessly, like in a spy movie, and make a new life somewhere else.. I know it could take time, but if I didn't do it, I was afraid the next beating would be my last.

Annie Lobert, *Fallen* (Franklin: Worthy Books, 2015), 91.

I grew up broken. I always felt disqualified in life, forever striving for perfection just to prove to the world I was ok. I was always misunderstood, labeled a rebellious, strong-willed child, a misfit everywhere I went, trusting of no one. Nobody knew I was fighting demons inside my own head. I turned 50 years old and realized I had been trafficked all those years ago, up in the treehouse. And then it hit me ... the magnitude of destruction and the winding trail of abuses that followed ... how it affected every unwittingly primal choice I had made in my early adult years.

Jennifer Castle, *A Healing Awakened* (Middletown: Legacy Sparrow LLC, 2018), 14.

The issue of choice must be carefully framed and understood in the context of the individual and cultural factors facing girls at risk. The sex industry may initially appear to provide a life of economic freedom, independence, and a secure future with someone who loves them, in contrast to the bleak futures that they may believe are their only alternatives. Selling sex may seem like a small price to pay, particularity for girls who have been abused and raped. Combine the power of media images to young women as sexual objects with the girls' familial and environmental situations - and the trap is set. It is often not until the reality of the situation begins to sink in, when the situation becomes too toxic or when she finally accepts the reality that her boyfriend is actually a pimp, that a girl may chose to leave. At that point, it is no longer a matter of choice, but rather a matter of escape.

Rachel Lloyd, *Girls Like Us* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 82.

Maria knew much more than most of us who aren't aware of the problem of sex trafficking and don't even realize that we come into regular contact with people who have been trafficked. As I began meeting domestic slaves through my work with victims, I would take them places like grocery stores or restaurants, only to find out that they had been in those exact locations with their traffickers. As a result, I have come to realize that when doing our daily errands, we all could be standing in line next to a slave who we don't even notice because he or she is either quiet, shy, of a difference culture, or be afraid to speak up. So I have

learned to keep an eye out and think past the barriers or self-protective postures when I suspect I am encountering a trafficking victim.

Nita Belles, *In Our Backyard: A Christian Perspective on Human Trafficking in the United States* (Xulon Press, 2011), 74.

When it comes to a young woman in trouble, whether it's because of addiction, abuse, or other hard life situations, the community that surrounds her is equally as important as her choices. Beginning in middle school, parents are usually removed from the primary seat of influence in a young person's life, and peers move in. During this time, frightened parents who truly desire what's best for their child must watch as they are replaced by those who are generally as self-centered and reckless as their own teen. It is critical, then, for a loving community to recognize when the teen is being harmfully influenced, and to pull her back from the road of destruction.

Mary Frances Bowley, *The White Umbrella* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 143.

It is extremely challenging for Americans to comprehend the reality of slavery in the United States. Most would prefer to turn away, deny it happens, or re-victimize the survivor by not believing their experiences. Doesn't everyone in America have free will? This is the land of the free, right? Surely everyone has options and choices, right? Unfortunately, that is not the case. Once in, the victim is usually enslaved until death. The tragic reality is that escape and rescue are extremely rare for a person who is trafficked. A few age out, which means a victim may be strong enough to survive and traffickers abandon the victim in favor of grooming a new and younger person. Occasionally a victim becomes very ill or is tossed out as traffickers find a more beneficial initiate.

Theresa Flores and Peggy Sue Wells, *Slavery In the Land of the Free* (Boise: Ampelon Publishing, 2016), 89.

Yes, telling my story makes me relive it. It brings the buried memories to the surface. But I do it voluntarily. And while it makes me vulnerable once again, it also makes me stronger. When I use my painful experience to help others, when I enter a worthy relationship and learn to trust another person, I move from "survivor" to "Victorious." That is why it is essential to heal mind, body and soul. Focusing on each part will help reduce the shame, feel worthy and learn techniques to help us thrive. The abuse is only part of my story. Part of my life. My whole story is about how the Lord removed the shame and unworthiness, how He helped me face the truths instead of the lies. My story is that I do have a name and I am worthy of being saved. My story is the spiritual journey that saved a broken girl and made her into a beautiful wife, who held yellow roses on her wedding day to her knight in shining armor - with God as her protector.

Theresa Flores, *The Slave Across the Street* (Boise: Ampelon Publishing, 2019), 168

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