

Sex Trafficking: Closer Than You Think

Two million people are being trafficked as sex slaves globally. I've always heard people talk about modern slavery and assumed it was something happening on the other side of the world. I felt sorry for the people over there, so I'd pray or sign a petition. Still, I was more concerned with the problems that were going on here.

Little did I know, sex trafficking has become one of the crimes of choice in urban neighborhoods because of its high return and low risk. You can sell a bag of drugs once, but you can sell a sex slave repeatedly.

A study on sex trafficking in major U.S. cities reveals two-thirds of traffickers are African American. Two-thirds of those being trafficked are African American also. Suddenly, the problem that I thought was a world away was getting closer to home. It was a problem in the black community.

Right in My Neighborhood

I stumbled across a documentary on human trafficking entitled, *Teenage Sex 4 Sale*. As I watched it, the camera panned the streets I drove on the way to church. It showed footage in our neighborhood. My heart broke as I saw young girls sitting on the curb with panties drooped below their knees and police lights swirling around them. Sex trafficking was not a problem in *the* community, it was a problem in *my* community. It just kept getting closer. Our church partnered with Rachel's House of Healing, a shelter for former sex workers. We held benefit concerts and trainings for human trafficking. We worked with the ladies and taught classes at the shelter.

What struck me about all of them was that they looked like normal church girls who could be sitting in our pews. Sometimes, they were sitting in our pews and no one had any idea of what they had been through. These girls were bursting with potential. Sure, pain and hurt, bruises and night terrors masked it, but it was there.

Persistent Pimps

We wanted to do more than just help young ladies pick up their lives after they had been trafficked. No new recruits needed to be pulled into this life. When we hosted a girl's conference, where we talked candidly with the girls about their worth, destiny, and God-authored design, we hoped to make a difference. Afterward we gathered some amazing women and men to write a 40-day devotional, *Queen in Me*. The book reminded our participants that God designed them with greatness in mind.

The event was an all out success. We poured into those young ladies. Educated them. Equipped them. We closed the door to sex trafficking for a good while, we thought. And, we did—for four whole days. Nevertheless, four days later one of our young ladies had been picked up by a pimp. This was too much. Sex trafficking was no longer in the community or down the street. This problem was staring us right in the face.

It was devastating to the young lady, her family, and to me. I wept, prayed, and was spitting mad. How dare the enemy come in our church? The enemy tried it, but glory to God, he didn't triumph. By the grace of God, police found her, and they took a serious pimp off the streets. We rejoiced in her recovery.

How God Preserved

That incident opened my eyes and I began to see there were others in need of help, right in the pews. I began to look back over my ministry and realize this wasn't the first young lady that was pulled into sex trafficking. It was closer than I ever believed.

I also found out that God was closer too. Many of those young ladies shared how God kept them alive through their horrible ordeals. They prayed for God to rescue them. He heard them and miraculously answered their prayer.

Jesus says in John 4:18, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." It's time for us to open our eyes. There are people who are hurting around us that need our help and God's love. There are young ladies who are so hungry for love and attention. They are desperate for someone to notice them. If we don't, a pimp will be happy to notice them.

Get Involved

Jesus came to set the captives free. He will use our hands, prayers, and influence. If you want to be connected with an organization to join in the fight against human trafficking in your area, visit

www.humantraffickinghotline.org. If you or someone you know is being trafficked, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.