

# 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](http://www.humantraffickinghotline.org). If you or someone you know is being trafficked, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

---

## The Act of Reconciliation

In the beginning God created Adam and Eve. He covered them with light. They stood before each other naked and unashamed, and it was very good. God gave them an exciting to-do list. Do be fruitful and multiply. Do eat from the fruit of the trees. Do fill the earth. Do have dominion over everything. Do name the animals. No name was out of bounds. Chihuahua, hippopotamus, and cockatiel all made the list.

There were many opportunities among the do's, but Adam and Eve honed in on the one don't: Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They decided they would do that too. They disobeyed and rebelled against God. They chose to listen to the devil in the form of a reptile rather than to the Creator, then something terrible happened.

Their eyes were opened to sin and pain. The darkness they unleashed quenched the light that used to cover their bodies. When they stood before each other, they were naked and ashamed, and rushed to cover themselves. Immediately their relationship with each other was damaged. It remained to be seen what would become of their relationship with God.

God came looking for His children, the crown of His creation. Love rustled through the garden as He longed to cast eyes on them. The sound of His near approach struck fear in their hearts, so Adam and Eve hid from His presence. God called them, and the man eventually answered. He explained how rude it was to answer with no clothes on, thus the reason for his hiding and delay. "Who told you were naked?" God queried. They blamed each other for their sin.

Their relationship with God was broken. Enmity had set in. Humanity was at odds with the animals, each other, and now with God. The chasm the rebellion caused had grown so great that God "was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:6). God decided to destroy man and beast with the Flood. Still, in His great love, He could not destroy everyone. He instructed Noah to build an ark. Noah preached God's love and the coming destruction for more than 100 years. God provided a way for all to be rescued from destruction, but only Noah, his family, and some of the animals were saved (see Genesis 7:1-3).

Even then, God's heart was broken that it had to come to this, and He vowed never to completely destroy the earth with water again. Time and time again, humanity's rebellion would cause the anger and judgment of God. It would pain God so much. The Bible records that God would be sorry over the destruction, and would change His mind concerning the judgment that would come upon humans (see Exodus 32:14; Judges 2:18; Jonah 3:10).

The problem was that human beings were doing the sinning, but only God was feeling sorry about it. This continued to rip humans farther away from God. The prophet Isaiah reminded humanity, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). Every relationship stood in jeopardy if something drastic was not done.

God sent deliverance and expressions of love. He sent salvation and acts of mercy, and still humanity had been largely unresponsive. Humans were too far away. Yet instead of writing them off, God wrote Himself in and decided that He would bridge the gap between humanity and Himself. From heaven God declared, "Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, who are far from righteousness: I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory" (Isaiah 46:12, 13).

Jesus, the Son of God, laid down His life for us so that we could be reconciled to God. To be reconciled means to mend a broken relationship. We were enemies of God, yet He loved and rescued us from destruction with the cross. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

Though we were far off from God, through the blood of Jesus we are brought near (Ephesians 2:13). Our status changes from enemy of the state to children of the King! When we confess our sins, God promises to cleanse us. Jesus' sacrifice offers forgiveness of our past and a new future. Heaven and all its resources are open to those who accept Christ as Savior. We are given an all-access pass and can boldly come to God and ask for help in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Why would God go through all this pain to mend our relationship with Him? Relationship is important to God. He is relationship. God is love. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He would not allow our relationships to remain broken. Even the shape of the cross seems to demonstrate the restoration and reconciliation of God. The vertical beam points us to communion with the Father, and the horizontal beam points us to communion with each other. Paul tells us that Christ has broken down the middle wall of separation, and though we were enemies, Jesus became our peace and removed the enmity between us (Ephesians 2:14-16).

This God is simply amazing! He went through the pain of earth, so that we could taste the joy of heaven. Jesus restored our relationship through His dying, but we have to maintain the reconciliation by our living. We must treasure the relationship Christ's spilt blood bought and grow it every day through prayer, Bible study, and worship. "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).