Human Trafficking, the Church, and You

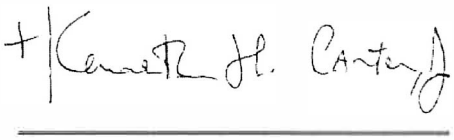
By

Rev. Robert Simmons Bledsoe

The Divinity School of Duke University

Date: November 2, 2023

Approved:



Bishop Ken Carter, Supervisor, 1st Reader

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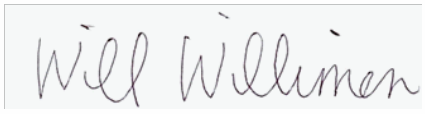

Dr. Will Willimon, D.Min. Program Director

This thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Ministry in the Divinity School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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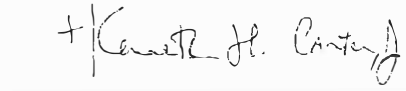

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Abstract

There are more slaves on planet earth right now than at any other point in history.[1] This thesis works to highlight the reality of human trafficking, share stories of victims and survivors, study the canon of Scripture proving that this conversation matters to God, hear from experts currently engaged in this work, and offer practical options for individuals and churches to join in the fight to end human trafficking. I believe Christians should be leading the charge to advocate, legislate, and do something about modern day slavery. This is a criminal empire that is seemingly in the dark, but it is hidden in plain sight. My prayer is that this thesis shines a light on the atrocity that is human trafficking. The primary methodology of this thesis includes the sharing of testimonies, stories, and realities that others have produced and shared over the last several decades. In the grand scheme of the world, this topic has not been widely discussed or written about. In order to honor those currently doing this work, I labored to include a wide variety of resources that shine a light on human trafficking. This underscores the scope of the issue while engaging with other voices in the conversation. I will begin by offering an accurate assessment of what trafficking is and looks like. I will highlight why this should matter to Christians and churches by engaging Scripture, theologians of the past and present, and existing scholarly work. I will then interview leaders from three different organizations about the work they do and what their suggestions would be for individuals and churches

[1] This is a shared view of several of the largest organizations working to eradicate human trafficking. The two primarily using this phrase are Free the Slaves and 50 for Freedom. Both organization's websites are shared in the bibliography at the conclusion of the thesis. "Modern Slavery: Myths & Facts." 50 for Freedom, January 14, 2021. https://50forfreedom.org/modern-slavery/

to be engaged in the fight against trafficking. Finally, I will take all of this data and research and conclude by offering my recommendations for individuals and churches to make a difference in their neighborhoods, communities, country, and the world. I believe this project is feasible, manageable, and needed by our society. I believe it will make a difference, and lives will be saved because of it.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to those who are still waiting for freedom. May we not grow weary. May we not grow complacent in this fight.

My most profound gratitude is extended to all those who took their valuable time to contribute to this thesis. I want to thank Trinity United Methodist Church of Bradenton, Florida for their support of my education and creating the space for me to do this work and be their pastor at the same time. Bishop Ken Carter was a supporter throughout this entire project and offered practical wisdom along the way. Ambassador (ret.) Susan Coppedge helped shape this thesis into something I could have only dreamed it would become. Her commitment to victims of trafficking and fighting for justice are inspirational to this work. I am thankful for Rev. Dr. Ken Evers-Hood who, on the first day of our program, told me to write about something I am passionate about instead of what I think someone else wants me to write about. That brief, yet important, conversation changed my life. I am thankful to all of the non-profits, churches, and government organizations working to fight human trafficking in the United States and around the world. Most of all, I am thankful to my wife, Jessica Bledsoe, for her passion that she shared with me about human trafficking over a decade ago. Your commitment to justice, your righteous anger, and your compassionate soul inspires me. You are my rock, and I thank God for you every day. Lastly, this is for my son Hardin and our child who is still growing in his/her Mommy's tummy – I hope your Mom and I can leave a better and safer world for you both and your friends.

Contents

Acknowledgements

This thesis would have not been possible without the time and effort so many have already given to the fight against human trafficking. For all those who I have not met or might not ever meet across the globe, I thank you for paving the way. I would also like to especially acknowledge the following persons for the commitment to this thesis.

1. Bishop Ken Carter as my 1st reader and Supervisor. Thank you for always encouraging me to keep going. I am eternally grateful for your shepherding of this project with kindness, patience, and grace.
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8. I am grateful for Rev. Kayln Wiley who served as the editor of this thesis.
9. My parents and grandparents who always lifted me up when I needed it. Your commitment to my goals has never faltered.
10. Lastly, to my wife Jessica, our son Hardin, and our future child who is growing every day. I am also thankful for our puppy George, who kept me company for countless hours. Without each you – this would have never been possible. Thanks for loving me so well.

1. Introduction

There are more slaves on planet earth right now than at any other point in history.[1] The thesis works to highlight this reality, share stories of victims and survivors, study the words of Scripture, and prove that this conversation matters to God. In this thesis, I will share highlights from interviews conducted with experts currently engaged in this work. The conclusion will offer practical options for individuals and churches to join in the fight to end trafficking. I believe Christians should be leading the charge to advocate, legislate, and do something about modern day slavery. This is a criminal empire that is seemingly in the dark and yet right in front of our faces. My prayer is that this thesis shines a light on the atrocity that is human trafficking. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."[2] This thesis will strive to convince and empower individuals to do something in their communities and churches to shine a light on human trafficking. May we all be filled with the power of love and light as we march into an empire of darkness and hate.

Christians also do well to remember the words in the Gospel of John chapter 8 verse 12 when Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never

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[2] Washington, Mailing Address: 1100 Ohio Drive SW, and DC 20242 Phone: 202 426-6841 Contact Us. n.d. "Quotations - Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial (U.S. National Park Service)." Accessed February 11, 2023. https://www.nps.gov/mlkm/learn/quotations.htm.

walk in darkness but will have the light of life."[3] This echoes Jesus' command in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 when he preaches, "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."[4] If the light of Christ shines in those who follow him, then Jesus' followers need to shine their light brightly for the world to see. When enough like-minded people come together, only then real change can truly occur.

I first learned about human trafficking in 2010 when my wife, then girlfriend, Jessica, convinced me to attend the Passion Conference in Atlanta over our college's winter break. I still remember hearing this question being asked to thousands of college students in the Georgia Dome: "There are 27,000,000 slaves on our planet today. That is more than any other point in human history. What can we do about it?"[5] Almost instantly, I sat up straight, looked over at Jessica who had tears in her eyes, and I knew that we would make this conversation a part of our lives and ministry for the rest of our days. Since then, we began to educate ourselves, volunteer, serve, help, fundraise, pray for, and walk alongside several anti-trafficking organizations. We have been in sanctuaries, coffee shops, on Capitol Hill, and community rooms listening to testimonies, hearing realties, and watching anti-trafficking work up close and in person. A few things we have learned are that this fight can be incredibly messy, and it is far more complex than you could

[3] New Revised Standard Bible Updated Edition (NRSVue). For more information on this translation see: "NRSV Updated Edition – SMU Perkins School of Theology." n.d. Accessed June 29, 2023. https://blog.smu.edu/perkins/nrsv-updated-edition/.
[4] NRSVue
[5] Giglio, Louie. Sermon at the Passion 2010 Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

imagine. We have faced the cold truth that while the number of community organizations, nonprofits, churches, and governments getting involved in the fight is rising, the numbers of victims being trapped in slavery and trafficked is rising faster.[6] Something has to change; something needs to happen to reverse this trend. Our prayer is that this thesis will help do just that.

We have also realized that when Jesus said to disciples in Matthew 9:37, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few,"[7] that perfectly reflects the work being done to fight against trafficking nationwide and around the world. What most people forget about is what Jesus says in the next verse. He then says, "Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." This thesis is a labor of love to help recruit, train, inspire, and empower more laborers for the Kingdom to get outside of their church walls and comfort zones and become engaged in the fight against human trafficking in their communities around the country and the world.

Maybe this is your first time reading or hearing anything about any of this, and you are feeling overwhelmed or paralyzed from not knowing what to do. Perhaps you are already thinking that the problem is too big, and you do not think you can do anything. Fear not! That is the appropriate response and the right place to begin. I, too, felt that same way in 2010. Since then, little by little, I have ended up writing on this and hoping it makes a difference. Maybe God is not calling you to write a thesis about the topic, but since you are holding this in your hand or reading it on a screen, God IS calling you to do

[6] Kim, Juliana. "No Region Is 'immune' as the Number of People in 'Modern Slavery' Climbs to 50 Million." NPR, September 13, 2022. https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2022/09/13/1122714064/modern-slavery-global-estimate-increase.

[7] Ibid.

something. I wonder what it will be for you. I do know that there are people praying over you as you read, study, learn, and prepare for action.

I encourage you to read this thesis slowly. I invite you to begin by finding a comfortable place to sit, having a moment of silence, taking few deep breaths, and offering a prayer to God to open your eyes, heart, and mind to what you are about to read. Take in the stories, statistics, and realities we will examine together in chapter two. Take time to get your Bible out and read these scriptures we will study in chapter three. Maybe you would even commit some of them to memory. Take in the words of the experts in chapter four and begin thinking about how what you read could be applied to your community or city. Then, when you reach the final chapter, my prayer is that you will be eager to jump into the fight – knowing that you need not be paralyzed by fear or overwhelmed with the scope of the problem. After all, if you do not do something – who will?[8]

2. What is Human Trafficking?

As we enter into the part of the thesis where testimonies, statistics, and realities of modern-day slavery will be shared I want to offer a trigger warning to the reader. Everything you read from this point forward is real. Nothing you read is exaggerated or modified in an effort to convince the reader of the wicked problem that human trafficking is. There are intense stories, shocking realities, and they could lead a person to be triggered if you have been impacted by this crime in some way or another in your life. I

[8] Throughout this thesis the metaphor of "fight" will be used often. It aligns with the idea of needing to aid, support, and assist those who are trapped. A song by artist Sara Grove entitled, "When the Saints" is an excellent song to listen to if at any point you as the reader need to pause and reflect during this thesis. This is heavy work, and this song could lighten the load.

encourage you to take your time reading this, perhaps skip over a part that might be too much for you, and to remember that you are not alone. We are all in this fight together. In the final section of this thesis are many resources available for support if you need them. Thank you for your bravery and willingness to learn about this reality in our world.

When I first learned about human trafficking in 2010, there were an estimated 27 million people enslaved in our world today. As of 2023, there are now an estimated 40 to 50 million people enslaved in our world.[9] According to the 2023 report from the International Labor Organization, there are approximately 28 million persons in forced labor and 22 million people in forced marriage.[10] That is an unfathomably large number of human beings who have been stripped of their lives, dignity, and God given purpose. My home state of Florida currently has just under 22 million people living in it. If all of Florida become enslaved, it would not even represent half of those being trafficked in our world today. Take a moment and allow that reality to set in as you begin to learn more. The International Labor Organization's report for 2023 also states, "Modern slavery occurs in almost every country in the world, and cuts across ethnic, cultural, and religious lines. More than half (52 percent) of all forced labor and a quarter of all forced marriages can be found in upper-middle income or high-income countries."[11] They further breakdown these numbers by saying:

> Most cases of forced labor (86 percent) are found in the private sector. Forced labor in sectors other than commercial sexual exploitation accounts for 63 percent of all forced

[9] Trafficking and slavery fact sheet - freetheslaves.net. Accessed April 13, 2023. https://freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Trafficking-ans-Slavery-Fact-Sheet-April-2018.pdf?platform=hootsuite.
[10] 50 Million People Worldwide in Modern Slavery, September 12, 2022. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_855019/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20people%20in,and%20children%20remain%20disproportionately%20vulnerable.
[11] Ibid.

> labor, while forced commercial sexual exploitation represents 23 percent of all forced labor. Almost four out of five of those in forced commercial sexual exploitation are women or girls. State-imposed forced labor accounts for 14 percent of people in forced labor. Almost one in eight of all those in forced labor are children (3.3 million). More than half of these are in commercial sexual exploitation.[12]

Of all of the crimes in the world, human trafficking is without a doubt the worst of them all. Human trafficking, which is also known as modern-day slavery, encompasses a massive web of crimes that comprise a range of human rights violations. Human beings are stripped of their dignity, worth, and value in order to profit from their body and labor in unthinkable ways. At its core, human trafficking is one human being treating another human being as less than themselves. They are treated as commodities and something to be used for a service. Traffickers do not see the human being standing in front of them as a child of God or someone with the divine image of God, the Imago Dei, in them.[13] Instead, they are just flesh to be sold, worked, used, and sometimes tortured. They are used for nothing more than profit. Having a hard time thinking it is real? Let me tell you a story.

This comes from The Polaris Project about a survivor named Aubree Alles:

> When I was 18, I took a joy ride in my mom's car. She called the cops, I was arrested, and sent to a faith-based dorm. That's where I met my trafficker. What I thought was her befriending me I know now was grooming. I was trafficked for 10 years. My trafficker controlled if I ate and when. She decided where I slept and for how long.
>
> My experience with police during that period was entirely negative and I absolutely did not trust law enforcement. Many times, off-duty officers forced me to perform sex acts by threatening to arrest me. At one point we were living in an extended stay hotel for almost two years. The owner definitely knew what was going on but my trafficker knew someone in the local sheriff's department and whenever a raid was coming, we would know and slip out.
>
> Overall, I was convicted 23 times for prostitution and related charges. The police knew who I was and what was happening, but they did not listen or talk to me. They harassed me, made fun of me, and acted disrespectfully. They would say 'oh, she's doing this because she's an addict.' They didn't understand that my trafficker used drugs

[12] Ibid.
[13] Genesis 1:26-27 NRSVue.

> to force me into sex trafficking. When I did try to leave my trafficker always managed to stop me. The last time, in 2012, I had packed all my stuff and was going to meet a chaplain that I had met at jail who was going to take me to a safe house.
>
> Instead, my trafficker showed up with five men, took me somewhere, locked me up, then managed to get me thrown back in jail. It was there I finally decided that I had enough. I was tired of life and wasn't sure I wanted to live. I said to myself, 'If I share my story, maybe that will be one less girl, one less Aubree who has to go through this.' I have been helping people get out of the life ever since I got out. Often, I do that with help from the Trafficking Hotline. Many times, we call the hotline for support, for someone to listen to our story. We are not always at the right place to leave, both physically and mentally. If I called the hotline and was told that we may have to report your information to the police, I would have dropped the call or maybe not called at all. It feels like deception.
>
> When I finally got out, an officer from the sheriff's department actually listened to me and cared about my story. I even flew back to Florida to be a part of the deposition. I made the choice, and I was able to tell my story on my terms. I told my story because if it reaches just one Aubree, reaches just one person, and helps them avoid a similar situation, that will be enough.[14]

The web of human trafficking is massive. In Aubree's story, even law enforcement, who took an oath to serve and protect and who were supposed to save her – were involved. She felt as if she could trust nobody. The addiction was a tool of control and coercion used by traffickers and viewed as criminal by law enforcement. She was told when she could eat and sleep. The traffickers manipulated everything about her life. This led to law enforcement prosecuting her for crimes her trafficker compelled her to commit. This was her reality until finally, someone stepped in and recognized what she was enduring was trafficking. There is necessary work to be done in supporting and empowering individuals who have been trafficked. Unfortunately, many current models addressing human trafficking prioritize the needs of law enforcement over the human rights violation that is trafficking.[15]

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[14] "Survivor Story: Aubree Alles - Polaris." n.d. Accessed January 19, 2023. https://polarisproject.org/survivor-story-aubree-alles/.

[15] Pearson, Elaine. *Human Traffic, Human Rights: Redefining Victim Protection*. London: Anti-Slavery International, 2002. 4.

2.1 Statistics, Types of Trafficking, and The Terrifying Truth

The reality of the human story is that there has always been violence, abuse, and forms of slavery. The powerful prey on the weak. Those with resources take advantage of those without for their own benefit and gain. The influential use their position of power for their own means instead of caring for the means of the other. Over time, despite advances in human rights, stricter legislation, and nonprofits and churches stepping into the fight, there are more enslaved people on planet earth than at any other time in human history.[16]

According to several of the largest anti-human trafficking organizations that are currently fighting the good fight, there are estimated 40 to 50 million people in some form of trafficking today. Human trafficking is a 150 billion dollar a year industry, and it comprised of 71% women and children and 29% male victims. It happens in every country. 5.4 out of every 1,000 people in the world are enslaved.[17] The Polaris Project, an international leader in anti-trafficking, created the National Human Trafficking Hotline as a means for data collection and rescue resources. They have recently released a data report compiled from the hotline in 2021 in the United States and have shared the information in a variety of graphs. A handful of graphs from the report can be seen on the following pages.

[16] This is a shared view of several of the largest organizations working to eradicate human trafficking. The two primarily using this phrase are Free the Slaves and 50 for Freedom. Both organization's websites are shared in the bibliography at the conclusion of the thesis. "Modern Slavery: Myths & Facts." 50 for Freedom, January 14, 2021. https://50forfreedom.org/modern-slavery/

[17] These statistics are generally agreed upon by leading anti-trafficking organizations such as International Justice Mission, The Polaris Project, End Slavery Now, The National Human Trafficking Hotline, and the A21 Campaign. All of their websites can be found in the bibliography or with a Google search.

Total Trafficking Situations	**10359**
Total Likely Victims	**16554**

Top 5 Types of Trafficking	
Escort Services	10%
Pornography	8%
Illicit Massage, Health, & Beauty	6%
Residential-Based Commercial Sex	5%
Personal Sexual Servitude	2%

Top 3 Recruiter Types	
Family Member/Caregiver	33%
Intimate Partner	28%
Employer	22%

Top 3 Recruitment Locations	
Internet - Dating Site	13%
Street	11%
Internet - Facebook	10%

Top 5 Risk Factors/Vulnerabilities	
Recent Migration/Relocation	54%
Mental or Physical Health Concern	10%
Substance Use Concern	9%
Unstable Housing	8%
Runaway/Homeless Youth	7%

Graph 1: 2021 Total Number of Trafficking Situation, Total Likely Victims, Top 5 Types of Trafficking, Top 3 Recruiter Types, Top 3 Recruiter Locations, Top 5 Risk Factors/Vulnerabilities

Top 3 Exploiter Types	
Employer	43%
Familial Relationship to Victim(s)	26%
Intimate Partner of Victim(s)	22%

Top 5 Force, Fraud and Coercion (FFC)	
Emotional Abuse	28%
Economic Abuse	26%
Threats	23%
Isolation	20%
Withholds/Denies Needs or Wants	14%

Top 5 Access Points	
Interaction with Friends/Family	43%
Interaction w LE/Criminal Justice System	23%
Access to Health Services	20%
Access to Mobile Apps/Social Media	14%
Access to General Social Services	11%

Graph 2: Top 3 Exploiter Types Top 5 Force, Fraud and Coercion, and Top 5 Access Points

2021 Race/Ethnicity of Likely Victims												
Form of Trafficking	**Labor**		**Sex**		**Sex & Labor**		**Sex + Sex & Labor**		**Other/Not Specified**		**Total Unique Victims**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
African	37	1%	22	0%		0%	22	0%		0%	61	0%
African American or Black	35	1%	442	4%	16	2%	458	4%	8	1%	499	3%
American Indian/Alaska Native/ Indigenous American		0%	43	0%	7	1%	50	0%	4	0%	55	0%
Asian	248	7%	497	5%	38	5%	535	5%	12	1%	795	5%
Caribbean	59	2%	9	0%		0%	10	0%		0%	69	0%
Caucasian or White	32	1%	643	6%	21	3%	664	6%	19	1%	714	4%
Latinx	1785	47%	395	4%	138	20%	533	5%	53	3%	2370	14%
Middle Eastern	9	0%	11	0%	3	0%	14	0%		0%	24	0%
Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic	7	0%	122	1%	8	1%	130	1%		0%	138	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander		0%	4	0%		0%	4	0%		0%	6	0%
Other	12	0%	17	0%		0%	18	0%		0%	31	0%
Unknown	1567	41%	8538	81%	497	70%	9035	80%	1413	93%	11996	72%
Total Unique Victims	**3785**		**10571**		**707**		**11278**		**1515**		**16554**	

Graph 3 – Race and Ethnicity of Likely Victims

2021 Gender of Likely Victims by Form												
Form of Trafficking	**Labor**		**Sex**		**Sex & Labor**		**Sex + Sex & Labor**		**Other/Not Specified**		**Total Unique Victims**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female	844	22%	8397	79%	454	64%	8851	78%	1016	67%	10690	65%
Gender Minorities[3]	9	0%	107	1%	4	1%	111	1%	17	1%	137	1%
Male	1814	48%	699	7%	103	15%	802	7%	134	9%	2747	17%
Unknown	1118	30%	1368	13%	146	21%	1514	13%	348	23%	2980	18%
Total Unique Victims	**3785**		**10571**		**707**		**11278**		**1515**		**16554**	

Graph 4 – Gender of Likely Victims[18]

[18] Each of the graphs and more from 2021 can be found at: https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Polaris-Analysis-of-2021-Data-from-the-National-Human-Trafficking-Hotline.pdf

2.2 Definition of Human Trafficking

The United States Department of Justice defines Human Trafficking as "a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex.[19] The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations define human trafficking as:

> a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
> b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (22 U.S.C. § 7102(11)).[20]

This is the legal definition for all forms of human trafficking in the United States. However, this does not fully explain the depths of trafficking and the many forms it takes.

2.3 Forms of Human Trafficking

There are two primary forms of human trafficking in our world today. They are sex trafficking and forced labor trafficking. While these are the most prominent, especially in the United States, other forms of trafficking exist. In the following sections eight types of trafficking will be examined in depth.

[19] "Human Trafficking | Key Legislation." 2016. December 9, 2016. https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/key-legislation.
[20] "Human Trafficking | National Human Trafficking Hotline." n.d. Accessed June 29, 2023. https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking/federal-law

Chart 1: How victims are trafficked according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.[21]

ACTIONS	MEANS Does not need to be present in a situation of sex trafficking of minors	PURPOSE
Recruiting includes proactive targeting of vulnerability and grooming behaviors **Harboring** includes isolation, confinement, monitoring **Transporting** includes movement and arranging travel **Providing** includes giving to another individual **Obtaining** includes forcibly taking, exchanging something for ability to control ***Soliciting** includes offering something of value ***Patronizing** includes receiving something of value *Only for sex trafficking	**Force** includes physical restraint, physical harm, sexual assault, and beatings. Monitoring and confinement is often used to control victims, especially during early stages of victimization to break down the victim's resistance. **Fraud** includes false promises regarding employment, wages, working conditions, love, marriage, or better life. Over time, there may be unexpected changes in work conditions, compensation or debt agreements, or nature of relationship. **Coercion** includes threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person, psychological manipulation, document confiscation, and shame and fear-inducing threats to share information or pictures with others or report to authorities.	**Commercial Sex Act** is any sex act on account of anything of value given to or received by any person. **Involuntary Servitude** is any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process. **Debt Bondage** includes a pledge of services by the debtor or someone under debtor's control to pay down known or unknown charges (e.g. fees for transportation, boarding, food, and other incidentals; interest, fines for missing quotas, and charges for "bad behavior). The length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined, where an individual is trapped in a cycle of debt that he or she can never pay down. **Peonage** is a status or condition of involuntary servitude based on real or alleged indebtedness **Slavery** is the state of being under the ownership or control of someone where a person is forced to work for another.

[21] "Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking - Welcome to ACF." Administration for Children and Families, November 21, 2017. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/otip/fact_sheet_human_trafficking_fy18.pdf.

Chart 2: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has a simple, but helpful graphic to show the eight types of trafficking the exist.

2.3.1 Sex Trafficking

One form of human trafficking is sex trafficking, or sexual exploitation, which is also known as sex slavery. The average age a victim enters into sex trafficking is 12-14 years old.[22] This is a terrifying and hard statistic to learn. When thinking about sex trafficking imagine that a pimp, or a trafficker, has 3 children under their control. The average victim is raped 15 or 20 times a night at $50 per time. That is $3,000 a night for the pimp. Now imagine the traffickers work the victims 350 nights a year – that is $1,050,000. That is all tax free, without restrictions, and made by only three victims. There are millions of sex trafficking victims around the world today in strip clubs, online, in brothels, and in gated communities in your city.

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline,

> Sex trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals perform commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Minors under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sex are considered to be victims of human trafficking, regardless of the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Sex traffickers frequently target victims and then use violence, threats, lies, false promises, debt bondage, or other forms of control and manipulation to keep victims involved in the sex industry for their own profit. Sex trafficking exists within diverse and unique sets of venues and businesses including fake massage businesses, escort services, residential brothels, in public on city streets and in truck stops, strip clubs, hostess clubs, hotels and motels, and elsewhere.[23]

The National Human Trafficking Hotline also shared that "in 2019, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) estimated that 1 in 6 endangered runaways reported to them were likely sex trafficking victims."[24] They report that "The International Labor Organization and Walk Free Foundation, in partnership with

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[22] These statistics are generally agreed upon by leading anti-trafficking organizations such as International Justice Mission, The Polaris Project, End Slavery Now, The National Human Trafficking Hotline, and the A21 Campaign. All of their websites can be found in the bibliography or with a google search.
[23] "Sex Trafficking | National Human Trafficking Hotline." Accessed June 29, 2023. https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking/sex-trafficking.
[24] Ibid.

International Organization on Migration, estimate that there are 4.8 million people trapped in forced sexual exploitation globally."

In the United States, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), was amended by The Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018.[25] This law defines "trafficking as recruiting, enticing, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining, maintaining, patronizing, or soliciting of an individual through the means of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of commercial sex."[26] For children, fortunately, the law is different. It is not necessary to demonstrate force, fraud, or coercion in sex trafficking cases involving children under the age of 18. The term commercial sex act is defined as "any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person" (22 U.S.C. 7102).[27]

Sex trafficking can be distinguished from other forms of commercial sex by applying the "Action + Means + Purpose Model."[28] What this means is that "at a minimum, one element from each column must be present to establish a potential situation of sex trafficking. The presence of force, fraud, or coercion indicates that the victim has not consented of his or her own free will. In addition, minors under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sex are considered victims of human trafficking regardless of the use of

[25] "Key Legislation on Human Trafficking." US Department of Justice Key Legislation on Human Trafficking, August 23, 2023. Accessed September 18, 2023. https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/key-legislation.
[26] Ibid.
[27] "Citizen's Guide To U.S. Federal Law On Child Sex Trafficking." The United States Department of Justice, May 12, 2023. Accessed September 18, 2023. https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-law-child-sex-trafficking.
[28] This model was shown previously on page 23 in chart 1.9.

force, fraud, or coercion."[29] Their age makes them too young to consent to commercial sex.

A reality of sex trafficking is that it is a market-driven criminal industry. It is completely based on the basic business principles of supply and demand. Therefore, people who purchase commercial sex increase the demand for commercial sex and likewise provide a profit incentive for traffickers. Traffickers seek to maximize profits by exploiting trafficking victims. Buyers of commercial sex need to recognize their involvement in driving demand, which maximizes profit for the traffickers. Paying for sex is not a victimless crime. "By not buying sex and not participating in the commercial sex industry, community members can reduce the demand for sex trafficking."[30]

Human trafficking is the second largest global criminal industry estimated at an annual amount of $150 billion. Unlike drugs or illegal weapons, human beings are reusable and often abused over a period of time profiting their trafficker. The organization End Slavery Now writes, "Worldwide, false promises are ways in which traffickers' bait and enslave their victims – both adults and minors." End Slavery Now emphasizes that "indigenous populations and those who live in abject poverty are typically economically and politically marginalized; thus, most lack rights and access to basic services such as education which make them particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking."[31]

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[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] "Sex Trafficking | Human Trafficking for Sex - End Slavery Now." n.d. Accessed June 29, 2023. http://endslaverynow.org/learn/slavery-today/sex-trafficking/.

They also explain:

> many times, people from these communities are offered false employment opportunities in major cities. For example, men and boys are sent overseas to work in construction and agriculture but are also forced to perform commercial sex acts. Women and young girls may be offered jobs as models, nannies, waitresses or dancers. Some traffickers operate under the guise of agencies that offer cross-country dating services. However, upon arrival, these individuals are abused, threatened, and sold in the sex industry… As a result, when sex trafficking victims are caught, they might be detained and prosecuted for criminal activity (e.g., prostitution). However, a legal charge is only one area of concern. Sex trafficking has devastating consequences for the trafficked individual. Victims may suffer from long-lasting physical and psychological trauma, disease (HIV/AIDS), drug addiction, malnutrition, and social ostracism.[32]

One victim turned advocate in her book *Stolen* shares four vulnerability factors she has seen lead to recruitment of American children into sexual slavery. They include:

- Abuse within the home, which normalizes that type of maltreatment.
- Economic disadvantages, such as coming from a single parent home.
- Exposure to drugs and alcohol in the home, which makes that lifestyle seem normal.
- Seeking a father figure to fill a "daddy hole."[33]

2.3.1.2 – Sex Trafficking Testimony

A horrifying story is one United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement shared about a woman named Tonya:

> Tonya spent night after night in different hotel rooms, with different men, all at the command of someone she once trusted. She was held against her will, beaten, and made to feel like she had no other option at the time, all by the man she thought she loved. She felt she deserved it. Tonya felt she couldn't escape. Afraid and confused, she thought the emotional and physical abuse she endured was her own doing.
>
> Tonya (a pseudonym) was a victim of human trafficking. 'He made me feel like I was doing it because I loved him, and in the end, we'd have a really good [financial] reward,' Tonya said. When Tonya was 13, she met Eddie (a pseudonym) at the apartment she was living in with her mother in the Dallas, Texas, area. His estranged wife was the property manager. Tonya was classmates with Eddie's stepdaughter, so the two would

[32] Ibid.
[33] Rosenblatt, Katariina, and Cecil Murphey. *Stolen: The True Story of a Sex Trafficking Survivor*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2014. 14.

often see each other at the apartment and in the local grocery store. It was there that the two first exchanged numbers.

'It was a causal relationship at first. You could see there was a mutual connection. I thought he was cute,' Tonya recalled. 'I could tell he was really flirtatious with me. We would talk and flirt a lot, but it was not much more than that until we met again when I was 15.'Things began to change one night when Tonya ran into Eddie at a bar. The two reconnected, the flirting picked up where it left off and Tonya went home with Eddie that night. Tonya was a runaway at the time, so she eventually moved in with Eddie and the two began a relationship. It was a 'normal' arrangement at first. Tonya would cook, clean, and look after Eddie's kids from time to time. However, it was when the two were at a party filled with alcohol and drugs that the relationship took a turn.

'He approached me and told me in so many words, 'I want you to have sex with this guy for money,' Tonya said. 'I was very uncomfortable, and I kept saying no, I didn't want to do it. He kept telling me, 'If you love me, you'll do this. It's just one thing. Just try it.'" After nearly 30 more minutes of constant pressure, Tonya agreed to have sex with the man. What she thought would be a one-time thing became an everyday routine for the next few weeks. Night after night and bar after bar, Tonya would go out with Eddie while he advertised her to potential "suitors." Tonya thought she loved him. She felt she could deal with the physical toll the trafficking took on her body. It turned out that the hardest part to deal with was the emotional and psychological effects. 'Being able to sleep with that many people and live with myself and get up every day and keep doing it and just lying there being helpless was so hard,' Tonya said.

Help eventually came for Tonya in the form of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Special Agent Keith Owens. The Grand Prairie, Texas police department had received a tip about Eddie's crimes and passed the case on to HSI Dallas. Owens and his team took over, moved in, and arrested Eddie. Eddie pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 12 years in prison on May 29, 2015. During the sentencing hearing, Tonya had to testify. Having to hear and see the man who trafficked her was difficult, especially not knowing what the outcome would be and whether he would be convicted.

'Telling people publicly about what I'd been through made me feel more ashamed because I'd never told anyone or was open about it,' Tonya said. 'Keith and [HSI Dallas special agent] Allison Schaefer were the only two people I've really told everything to.' Tonya feels her life is a little better now. She doesn't think or talk about what she's been through and doesn't want people to know that was once a part of her life. Her focus is on moving forward.' I want to finish getting my GED and go to community college, take on journalism, go to college and study political science and pre-law,' she said. 'I just want to live a normal life, accept my past and not run from it.' Eventually, Tonya knows that she will have to talk about her experience again. If she has kids one day, she wants to be able to tell them what their mother went through. She wants them to know what to look out for and how to avoid going through something as awful as she did.

Until then, she passes along her words of encouragement to anyone who may be experiencing what she did. She wants any victims out there to know they are not alone.'

> You're worth something. You're very important to someone,' Tonya said. 'No matter what he says, it's not true. You're worth something.'[34]

This story is all too common. It is one where a vulnerable person is befriended, cared for, and made to feel important – oftentimes for the first time in their life. It is because of this they feel they owe the person caring for them something. This is when the trafficker makes their move, and everything changes for the victim.

2.3.1.3 – Grooming

Oftentimes, this method is called the lover boy method. Younger children are likely to be the targets of this method of exploitation. Experts also refer to this type of behavior as grooming, or when someone similar to the person lures them in with lies. The organization Darkness to Light explains what grooming is. "Grooming allows offenders to slowly overcome natural boundaries long before sexual abuse occurs. On the surface, grooming a child can look like a close relationship between the offending adult, the targeted child and (potentially) the child's caregivers. The grooming process is often misleading because the offender may be well-known or highly regarded in the community. As a result, it's easy to trust them."[35] They have also produced the following chart to explain how this happens and what it looks like:

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[34] "Human Trafficking Victim Shares Story | ICE." n.d. Accessed June 29, 2023. https://www.ice.gov/features/human-trafficking-victim-shares-story.

[35] "Grooming and Red Flag Behaviors." n.d. Darkness to Light. Accessed June 15, 2023. https://www.d2l.org/child-grooming-signs-behavior-awareness/.

Stage	Description	Example
Targeting the Child	Perpetrators may target and exploit a child's perceived vulnerabilities including: emotional neediness, isolation, neglect, a chaotic home life, or lack of parental oversight, etc.	The offender will pay special attention to or give preference to a child.
Gaining the Child's & Caregiver's Trust	Perpetrators work to gain the trust of parents/caregivers to lower suspicion and gain access to the child by providing seemingly warm yet calculated attention/support. The perpetrator gains the child's trust by gathering information about the child, getting to know their needs, and finding ways to fill those needs.	"I saw you reading the new Superman comic. I'm planning to go see the new movie, I can take you if you want to go."
Filling a Need	Once the perpetrator begins to fill the child's needs, they may assume noticeably more importance in the child's life. Perpetrators utilize tactics such as gift giving, flattery, gifting money, and meeting other basic needs. Tactics may also include increased attention and affection towards the targeted child.	"I know you love jewelry so I got you this watch."
Isolating the Child	The perpetrator uses isolation tactics to reinforce their relationship with the child by creating situations in which they are alone together (babysitting, one-on-one coaching, "special" trips). The perpetrator may reinforce the relationship with the child by cultivating a sense that they love and understand the child in a way that others, even their parents, cannot. The adult can start to tell the child that no one cares for them the way they do, not even their parents.	"You can trust me because no one understands you the way I do."
Sexualizing the Relationship	Once emotional dependence and trust have been built, the perpetrator progressively sexualizes the relationship. This occurs through talking, pictures, and creating situations in which both are naked (swimming). The adult exploits the child's natural curiosity and trust using stimulation to advance the sexual nature of the relationship.	"Have you ever masturbated? I can show you how, it feels really good."
Maintaining Control	Once sexual abuse is occurring, perpetrators commonly use secrecy, blame, and threats to maintain the child's participation and continued silence. In order to maintain control, perpetrators use emotional manipulation; they make the child believe they are the only person who can meet their emotional and material needs. The child may feel that the loss of the relationship, or the consequences of exposing it, will be more damaging and humiliating than continuing the unhealthy relationship.	"If you tell anyone, we both could go to jail, We won't be able to be together." Or "If you tell anyone, something bad could happen to your family."

Darkness to Light explains that the following items are red flags to keep an eye on with your family: someone giving special attention / preference to a child, giving gifts, touching / hugging the child, being a sympathetic listener, offering to help the family, and gaining access to the child via the internet.[36] Each of these things might seem like a person is being a genuinely kind person, but parents and family members always need to keep a close eye on what their child is doing and who they are doing it with. A sad reality, but one that needs to be noted, is that grooming has been at the heart of clergy abuse of minors in Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelic churches. While it is not something people want to think about, it is the truth. Everyone, including religious

[36] Ibid. Further explanations and example are also available on their website.

institutions, needs to be held accountable in this fight. Remember, grooming can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time.

2.3.1.4 – Sex trafficking in the United States

End Slavery Now also reports on the reality of sex trafficking in the United States. They write:

> The United States is a source, transit, and destination country for sex trafficking victims. Trafficked men, women and children are typically taken to brothels, escort services, massage parlors, strip clubs, or hotels and are prostituted on the streets or forced to participate in pornography. Primary countries of origin for foreign victims in FY 2013 were Mexico, the Philippines, Thailand, Honduras, Guatemala, India, and El Salvador. Americans may also be trafficked within the U.S. or sent to other industrialized states such as the Netherlands, Germany, and Japan.

Too often, people assume sex trafficking is something happening on the other side of the globe and not in their community. Yet, the cold reality is that it is happening, and it is happening right now. Chapter 5 of this thesis lists various ways you can find access to stories from survivors who share their experience on being an average American citizen who was sex trafficked.

2.3.1.5 – Sex Trafficking and the Internet

Another chilling reality is that supply and demand have increased throughout the years partially due to the internet and the ease with which traffickers and customers can discreetly complete a transaction.

> Traffickers utilize social media, dating sites and online advertisements to market minors and trafficked victims. Ads seemingly posted by a person willingly engaged in the sex trade are often created or monitored by traffickers. Traffickers lie about the victim's age and may even disguise themselves as the person in the ad when communicating with johns via the internet or phone. Some websites try to screen ads for trafficking; however, the sheer volume of ads makes this process a daunting task. For instance, when the U.S. Craigslist Adult Services Section was available, there were 10,000-16,000 adult services postings per day in the U.S. alone. Additionally, it's difficult to determine if the person advertising is independently working in the sex industry or is under a trafficker.[37]

[37] "Sex Trafficking | Human Trafficking for Sex - End Slavery Now." Accessed June 29, 2023. http://endslaverynow.org/learn/slavery-today/sex-trafficking/.

Internet safety in today's world is challenging. Monitoring your child's on-line footprint and who they are chatting with, or what websites they are visiting, is an important conversation for families to have . This includes social media. With the click of a few buttons, you can watch anything you want or order a sex-worker to a hotel room. It is terrifying, but it is the way it is in our world today.

2.3.1.7 – Identifying Sex Trafficking Victims

The following are common warning signs to aid in the identification of sex trafficking victims as you travel or are out and about in your city:

- They want to stop participating in selling or trading sex but feel scared or unable to leave.
- They disclose that they were reluctant to engage in selling sex but that someone pressured them into it.
- They live where they work or are transported by others between home and workplace.
- They are children who live with or are supported by or dependent on a family member with a substance abuse problem or who is abusive in other ways.
- They have a pimp or manager in the sex trade.
- They work in an industry where it may be common to be pressured into performing sex acts for money, such as a strip club, illicit cantina, go-go bar, or illicit massage business.
- They have an older, or simply controlling parent, guardian, romantic partner, or "sponsor" who will not allow you to meet or speak with the person alone or monitors their movements, spending and/or communications.[38]

[38] "Recognizing Sex Trafficking - Polaris." 2015. October 13, 2015. https://polarisproject.org/sex-trafficking/.

Sex trafficking is real, it is everywhere, and millions of people are trapped in a living nightmare every single day. Unfortunately, it is not the only type of trafficking that exists.

2.3.2 Labor Trafficking

Most organizations agree that more than half of the world's trafficking population is in some kind of forced labor. Examples of forced labor include cutting down trees/logging, mining, fishing, brick kilns, factory work, harvesting crops, ranching, domestic labor, soliciting, and in service industries in roles like dishwashers, janitors, gardeners, and maids.

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, "Labor trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals perform labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Labor trafficking includes situations of debt bondage, forced labor, and involuntary child labor. Labor traffickers use violence, threats, lies, and other forms of coercion to force people to work against their will in many industries."[39] According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), "forced labor can be understood as work that is performed involuntarily and under the menace of any penalty. It refers to situations in which persons are coerced to work through the use of violence or intimidation, or by more subtle means such as manipulated debt, retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities."[40]

[39] "What Is Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking)." n.d. Accessed March 10, 2023. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/definition/lang--en/index.htm#.
[40] Ibid.

According to the ILO, “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily" is labor trafficking.[41] The Forced Labor Protocol explicitly reaffirms this definition, and it consists of three elements:

1. Work or service refers to all types of work occurring in any activity, industry or sector including in the informal economy.
2. Menace of any penalty refers to a wide range of penalties used to compel someone to work.
3. Involuntariness: The terms ‘offered voluntarily’ refers to the free and informed consent of a worker to take a job and his or her freedom to leave at any time. This is not the case for example when an employer or recruiter makes false promises so that a worker takes a job he or she would not otherwise have accepted.[42]

Forced labor occurs when individuals are compelled against their will to provide work or service through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. This crime happens both in the United States and overseas. The ILO estimated that “24.9 million people around the globe were in forced labor as of 2016.”[43] Traffickers who exploit people for forced labor do not discriminate. Victims can be any age, race, religious affiliation, gender identity, or nationality. They may also come from any socioeconomic group. The Department of Homeland Security writes, “Certain risk factors, however, may make certain individuals more vulnerable to forced labor than others. These include:

- Unstable immigration status
- Language barriers
- Poverty and lack of basic needs like food, shelter, and safety
- The psychological effects of a recent or past trauma
- Lack of social support systems like friends, family, and community
- Physical or developmental disabilities”[44]

[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] “What Is Forced Labor? | Homeland Security.” n.d. Accessed May 12, 2023. https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/forced-labor.

The Department of Homeland Security also highlights another discomforting reality:

> Forced labor indicators often intersect and overlap, feeding into each other. Some signs may be more subtle than others. For instance, the individual could fall into debt during the recruitment process, compounded by an employer who takes unexpected deductions from their pay. The worker then cannot repay their debt as quickly as they had anticipated, falling further into debt bondage as a result of both deception and withholding of wages.[45]

Given all of the barriers persons may face like poverty, fleeing home, language barriers, hunger, separation from family, and other traumas – it is sad to imagine, but easy to see how easily a person who is offering food, shelter, and a job would be able to convince someone to come with them. The arrangement might be positive for the short term, but at some point, the trafficker will turn on them. Things may change for the worse in an instant. It might also be a gradual eroding of choices and freedom. Jessica Bledsoe, a licensed clinical social worker who has counseled with several survivors of human trafficking stated, "These situations are all the more difficult to see because oftentimes the victims do not even realize they are victims. They think they are just down on their luck or are stuck. This is why education, advocacy, and building bridges in the community are so important."[46]

An example of forced labor can be seen and more clearly understood from a case study conducted by International Justice Mission (IJM) in 2016.[47] The first study contracted by IJM aimed to determine the prevalence of labor trafficking and exploitation among migrant fishermen in certain high-risk provinces in Thailand—exploring the

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Bledsoe, Jessica. Verbal conversation in the Spring of 2019 after completing a group therapy session with survivors of human trafficking with an organization called Into the Jordan of Fort Myers, Florida.
[47] "Thai Fishing Study | International Justice Mission." n.d. Accessed January 25, 2023. https://www.ijm.org/thai-fishing-study.

characteristics of those who have experienced labor abuses and to understand the modes of abuse.

In 2016, IJM partnered with the Issara Institute to survey Burmese and Cambodian men, who had worked on Thai fishing boats within the last five years (2011-2016) and who were housed in communities in or around ports and piers in five specific provinces in Thailand (Nakhon Si Thammarat, Pattani, Ranong, Samut Sakhon and Songkhla). Using a four-stage sampling strategy, a sample of 260 fishermen was randomly selected from the five provinces. 12 of the 260 survey respondents had worked on a Thai fishing boat more than five years ago (before 2011). These respondents were, therefore, removed from the analysis of the five-year prevalence of labor trafficking, leaving a total sample size of 248 respondents.

The research team used an in-depth survey instrument, which included both closed and open-ended questions to learn about the fishermen's experiences. All surveys were conducted in the native language (Burmese or Khmer) of the fishermen and were completed between March and July of 2016. The study shows that trafficking of migrant fishermen on Thai fishing boats has been widespread, and there are common patterns of abuse in the industry. Of the fishermen interviewed about their experience between 2011 and August 2016:

- 37.9% had been trafficked;
- 14.1% were physically abused, while 31.5% witnessed a crewmate's abuse at sea;
- 76.2% accrued debt prior to even beginning work (either to an employer, broker, or net supervisor)

The Thai fishing example is not unique. There are too many types of stories just like this happening around the world. Another example comes from the Polaris Project, and it is

about a woman named Fainess Lipenga crossing international borders with the promise of a better life:

> I was brought to the United States to work in the household of a diplomat from my home country, Malawi. I grew up in a poor village without electricity or running water. I suffered abuse since childhood and was in an abusive relationship as a teenager. There was little hope for a better life. So, when this family promised me an opportunity in the United States and told me I could get an education while I was there and money to help my family back home, I was so very excited. I was going to break out of poverty and help support others in my village. When we got here though, nothing was what I had been promised.
>
> My employer took away my passport, locked me in the house and disconnected the phone whenever she left home. I was made to sleep on the basement floor. I was so isolated from the outside world that I had no idea there was help available. I worked all the time – literally all the time. I cared for children and cleaned and did all manner of household chores. My employer would allow her friends and colleagues to come over and bring their children and I was to care for them as well. She yelled at me constantly and was physically abusive. On top of this, she married a man who owned a commercial cleaning business, and I was put to work for him too. In the middle of the night, I was taken to businesses and office buildings to clean carpets using heavy machinery. I worked all night then was returned to my employer's home to work some more.
>
> For all this, I was paid less than 40 cents an hour. I was used, like a piece of clothing you wear, like I was not a person. Everything was a nightmare, like a horror movie - except at a horror movie you can see what was happening. But for me, it was happening behind the door, so no one knew. I became physically sick. I thought I was going to die, here, all alone, and my family would never know. I thought she would just throw my body out and no one would ever find out what happened to me. Some people ask then why I didn't leave. Well, there were very real physical concerns. I had no money, no passport, and I didn't know anyone. I did not speak English well. But also, I know now it is because of what I went through as a child. I did not really fully know that this was not normal, that a person should not be treated this way. I certainly did not know what trafficking was.
>
> Finally, though, I knew I had to get out. I think the final push was when I overheard my trafficker bragging about how she had made me sign a contract, in English, which I did not know how to read at the time. She told me when I was signing that she was going to pay me $980 a month. She was proud of this trick. I had found my passport once when I was cleaning so I knew I could get it. I slept in the basement and could hear the garage door opening and closing so I knew when I was alone, and it was safe to leave. I threw a few things I had into a trash bag, grabbed my passport, and left. I went to someone's home who I knew slightly who was also in the diplomatic community. She helped me to find a job with another family, which was good, but I was so worn down that I got very sick. I had to be hospitalized and – I don't know how this happened – my trafficker was actually allowed to come see me in the hospital. Eventually I got well enough to leave but I still struggled emotionally, physically, and financially. Physical escape was only one step on the journey to freedom.
>
> It took a lot of work and time to find a safe, supportive place to live and the help I needed. I had a lawyer and she helped very much as well. I learned English, mostly from watching cartoons and television shows! Today I am working, I am advocating for

> survivors of human trafficking, and I am studying to become a nurse. I am healing and I want to help others to do the same.[48]

Unfortunately, Fainess' story is one that millions of others have as well. This is not just something that happens every once in a while. Labor trafficking can happen to people of all ages, cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs. The reality is that nobody is safe from this type of lie and trap. It is a terrifying notion, but it is one that is true and needs to be talked about more regularly and openly by society at large. The starting point is to know the signs so if you see or suspect something, you can say something. There are many different types of labor trafficking to understand.

2.3.3 Debt Bondage

One of the most prevalent forms of labor trafficking is called debt bondage. End Slavery Now explains debt bondage in this way:

> Bonded labor, also known as debt bondage and peonage, happens when people give themselves into slavery as security against a loan or when they inherit a debt from a relative. It can be made to look like an employment agreement but one where the worker starts with a debt to repay – usually in brutal conditions – only to find that repayment of the loan is impossible. Then, their enslavement becomes permanent.[49]

Bonded labor is designed to exploit workers. The cyclical process begins with a debt, whether acquired or inherited, that cannot be paid immediately. Then, while the worker labors to repay the debt, the employer continues to add on additional expenses. For instance, a laborer may begin with an initial debt of $200. While working and unable to leave, this worker needs a shelter, food, and water. The employer tacks on $25 per day to

[48] "Survivor Story: Fainess Lipenga - Polaris." 2020. September 16, 2020. https://polarisproject.org/survivor-story-fainess-lipenga/.
[49] "Bonded Labor | Debt Bondage or Peonage - End Slavery Now." Accessed April 22, 2023. http://endslaverynow.org/learn/slavery-today/bonded-labor/.

the debt to cover those expenses. Consequently, the employee only grows his debt while continuing to labor for his debtor, and repayment is impossible.

> Oftentimes this debt is passed down from generation to generation, making it eerily similar to chattel slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries. It's seen throughout the world when employers force the children of employees to labor in the same situation as their parents in order to help pay off their parents' debt or when parents or family members pass away, and employers require another body to fill the lost role – all under the pretense of a debt owed.[50]

Migrant laborers are particularly vulnerable to this form of enslavement. In their home countries, migrant laborers pay a recruitment fee to labor agencies and employers for a job in a foreign country, looking for an economic opportunity. These situations are ripe for exploitation because agencies and employers hold a debt or a bond over these employees. Instead of honoring a genuine term of employment, some recruiters or employers unlawfully exploit the initial debt by adding travels costs, housing, and other fees that are designed to keep the migrant workers from ever being capable of repayment. In some scenarios, these recruiters and employers confiscate and hold legal immigration documents and identification documents, making legal employees entirely dependent on them. They may also require them to work in order to maintain their legal status. In other instances, recruiters falsify documents or ignore them altogether, once again making migrant workers vulnerable and dependent as they do not have lawful status in the destination country. In these situations, workers often fear coming forward and seeking redress as they fear being jailed or deported.

An example of bonded labor occurs right here in Florida, just two hours from where I live. Luckily, an organization call The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) exists. The CIW

[50] Ibid.

is a worker-based human rights organization internationally recognized for its achievements in fighting human trafficking and gender-based violence at work. The CIW is also recognized for pioneering the design and development of the Worker-driven Social Responsibility paradigm, a worker-led, market-enforced approach to the protection of human rights in corporate supply chains. Built on a foundation of farmworker community organizing starting in 1993 and reinforced with the creation of a national consumer network since 2000, CIW's work has steadily grown over more than twenty years to encompass three broad and overlapping spheres.[51]

The first sphere launched in 2011 and is called the Fair Food Program (FFP). "The FFP is a groundbreaking model for Worker-driven Social Responsibility (WSR) based on a unique partnership among farmworkers, Florida tomato growers, and participating retail buyers, including Subway, Whole Foods, and Walmart. In 2015, the Program expanded into tomatoes in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, and New Jersey, as well as Florida strawberries and peppers."[52]

The second sphere is CIW's Anti-Slavery Campaign. This campaign "has uncovered, investigated, and assisted in the prosecution of numerous multi-state farm slavery operations across the Southeastern U.S., helping liberate over 1,200 workers held against their will since the early 1990's."[53] CIW also pioneered the worker-centered approach to slavery prosecution, played a key role in the passage of the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act, and co-founded the national Freedom Network USA, and the Freedom Network Training Institute, which is regularly attended by local, state and federal law enforcement officials. The CIW is a partner in The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST), advocating for solutions to prevent and end all forms of human trafficking and modern slavery around the world. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

[51] "About CIW." https://ciw-online.org/blog/author/admin-0213. 2013. Coalition of Immokalee Workers. March 14, 2013. https://ciw-online.org/about/.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

recognized the CIW in 2010 with the Trafficking in Persons Hero Award, for the CIW's "determination to eliminate forced labor in supply chains."[54]

The final sphere is CIW's national Campaign for Fair Food. This campaign "educates consumers on the issue of farm labor exploitation – its causes and solutions – and forges alliances between farmworkers and consumers that enlist the market power of major corporate buyers to help end exploitation. Since 2001, the campaign has combined creative, on-the-ground actions with cutting edge online organizing to win Fair Food Agreements with fourteen multi-billion-dollar food retailers, including Walmart, McDonald's, Subway, Sodexo and Whole Foods, establishing more humane farm labor standards and fairer wages for farmworkers."[55] I include this information on the CIW in the debt bondage section because so many persons who come to the United States seeking a better life find themselves in a situation described in the previous pages. Highlighting the CIW gives hope that work is being done to help those trapped in these unthinkable situations.

2.3.4 Domestic Servitude

Anti-Slavery International explains what domestic servitude is. They write, "domestic workers perform a range of tasks in private homes including cooking, cleaning, laundry, taking care of children and elderly people, and running errands. Some domestic workers also live in their employers' homes and are often considered 'on call' to undertake work for their employer 24 hours a day. The 2022 Global Estimates of

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

Modern Slavery indicated that domestic workers faced increasing pressures and abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

For some domestic workers, the circumstances, and conditions of their work amount to slavery. This can be the case when, for example:

- Employers stop domestic workers from leaving their home.
- Pay is low, delayed or withheld.
- Pay is given 'in kind', in the form of food and/or accommodation.
- Workers are subjected to violence or threats.
- Workers' identity documents are withheld.
- Employers limit domestic workers' contact with family.[56]

> The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that at least 67 million people are employed as domestic workers across the world. Around four in five of all domestic workers are women and girls – and the ILO estimates that more girls under the age of 16 work in domestic service than in any other category of child labor. Of these, the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery demonstrate that 1.4 million of the 17.3 million people in forced labor in the private sector, are exploited in domestic work.
>
> Some domestic workers migrate from other countries or regions, mainly from rural areas to the city. For many migrants, domestic work is one of the very few options available to enable them to provide for themselves and their families.
>
> Domestic work is poorly regulated and typically undervalued. Often, domestic workers do not enjoy the same protections as other workers, including legal contracts, minimum pay, holidays, health care, social security, and maternity benefits. In many countries, domestic workers are not considered 'workers' at all, but rather as informal 'help' – and are excluded from national labor regulations. In countries where domestic workers are covered by national labor laws, enforcement is often poor.[57]

Domestic servitude is all too prevalent. The most effective way to be an advocate is to remember if you see something – say something.

2.3.5 Forced Marriage

According to the International Labor Organization, "Forced marriage is a human rights violation and a harmful practice that leads to the infliction of physical, mental, or

[56] "Domestic Slavery: What Is It?" n.d. Anti-Slavery International. Accessed June 3, 2023. https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/domestic-work-and-slavery/.
[57] Ibid.

sexual harm or suffering."[58] The Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labor and Forced Marriage 2022 report explains why this is true in more detail:

> Forced marriage violates several international human rights conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery 1956, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1981, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC), and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime Supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol). The introduction to the report continues by saying, "It [forced marriage] has both short- and long-term consequences, and negatively impacts the capacity of individuals to realize their full rights.[59]

It is important to recognize that "an estimated 22 million people were living in forced marriage on any given day in 2021, nearly three in every thousand people in the world."[60] "These 22 million are people who were forced to marry at any time in their life, without their consent, and who are still alive and living with their partner. Women and girls make up 14.9 million of this total."[61]

This is also something that happens around the entire world, the report says:

> Forced marriages take place in every region in the world. Nearly two-thirds of all forced marriages, an estimated 14.2 million people, are in Asia and the Pacific. This is followed by 14.5 percent in Africa (3.2 million) and 10.4 percent Europe and Central Asia (2.3 million). When regional population is accounted for, the Arab States are the region with the highest prevalence at 4.8 per thousand people, followed by Asia and the Pacific at 3.3 per thousand. The Americas has the lowest prevalence of forced marriage at 1.5 per thousand people.[62]

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[58] International Labour Organization: Global Estimates of Modern Slavery Forced Labour and Forced Marriage, September 2022. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf. 59.
[59] UN Human Rights Council, Resolution 41/8, Consequences of child, early and forced marriage, A/HRC/RES/41/8 (2019).
[60] Arora, Anshana. 2018. "Child Marriage: Latest Trends and Future Prospects." UNICEF DATA. July 5, 2018. https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-latest-trends-and-future-prospects/.
[61] International Labour Organization: Global Estimates of Modern Slavery Forced Labour and Forced Marriage, September 2022. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf. 59.
[62] Ibid. 61.

The report explains that "forced marriages occur in every region of the world and cut across ethnic, cultural, and religious lines. 'The many drivers of forced marriage are closely linked to longstanding patriarchal attitudes and practices and are highly context specific.'[63] Girls and women are forced to marry in exchange for payment to their families, the cancellation of debt, or to settle family disputes."[64]

It is also worth noting that, "family members are primarily responsible for forced marriages. Most persons were forced to marry by their parents (73 percent) or other relatives (16 percent)."[65]

2.3.6 Organ Harvesting/Removal

The World Health Organization has published "Guiding Principles on Human Cell Tissue and Organ Transplantation" which outline the foundational regulations for the removal of organs from deceased and living donors for transplantation.[66] The fundamental principles on the list include "informed and voluntary consent" as well as no "monetary payment" which are violated in the act of organ harvesting. According to Operating Underground Railroad:

> While it is not as prevalent as sex and labor trafficking, organ removal is a widespread and universally condemned violation. Many victims are killed or left for dead once one or more organs has been removed. This black market thrives in the trade of bones, blood, and other body tissues – with as many as 7,000 kidneys illegally obtained by traffickers every year. The individuals involved with organ removal consist of four populations. First are desperate patients willing to travel great distances and face considerable

[63] "Walk Free: Stacked Odds - How Lifelong Inequality Shapes Women and Girls' Experience of Modern Slavery", 2020. https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2020/10/19130043/WF-Stacked-Odds-20210517.pdf. 6.
[64] International Labour Organization: Global Estimates of Modern Slavery Forced Labour and Forced Marriage, September 2022. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf. 69.
[65] Ibid.
[66] "Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015. https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2015/UNODC_Assessment_Toolkit_TIP_for_the_Purpose_of_Organ_Removal.pdf.

> insecurity to obtain transplants. Second is equally desperate organ sellers. Third are outlaw surgeons willing to break the law. Lastly, there are organ brokers and other intermediaries[67]

Organ harvesting is one of the most heinous crimes. While organ harvesting is a much smaller population of trafficking victims, it is still prevalent enough to be internationally recognized by the United Nations. Organ harvesting is listed in the United Nations' Trafficking in Persons Protocol, Article 3(a) which says, "Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs."[68] It is also worth noting that the United States does not recognize forced marriage or organ harvesting as forms of trafficking unless the other elements or trafficking are met.

2.3.7 Forced Begging

It is worth noting that it was nearly impossible to find anything written about forced begging and all that it encompasses. In my research, almost all of the websites and information I could locate routed back to the paragraphs I quote below.

> Forced begging is a form of human trafficking which may also involve forced criminal activity or organized crime. Persons who are forced to beg have been coerced, threatened, deceived, or forced and exploited to beg for the financial gain of another. Victims do not keep the money given to them: some or all of it must be given to the abuser. Forced begging has been recognized as slavery only recently.
>
> Be it on vacation or closer to home, many have experienced the discomfort deriving from being begged for money by small children. What is not always evident, however, is that many of these children have been coerced into their situation through

[67] "The Different Types of Human Trafficking." n.d. Accessed January 29, 2023. https://ourrescue.org/blog/different-types-of-human-trafficking.
[68] "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime." n.d. OHCHR. Accessed March 22, 2023. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons.

> intimidation, threats, and deception. They are, therefore, victims of child labor trafficking – a prevalent form of human trafficking.
>
> Forced child begging is classified as one of the worst forms of Child Labor and violates the basic human rights protection framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also one of the most visible forms of human trafficking in existence: the exploited children are in plain sight, impossible to miss for any pedestrian walking by.[69]

Another resource that was shared with me for this type of trafficking is Iveta Cherneva's Law Review through the University at Buffalo. She writes, "Beggars are a part of the street landscape of any major city. However, many of the children and elderly women begging on the streets are forced beggars: victims of trafficking in persons who are part of a beggar's ring with an organizational complexity comparable to that of a medium-size business enterprise."[70] In her review she also states, "Although it is occasionally mentioned in a limited number of international reports and legal documents as a form of trafficking-related exploitation, forced begging is a largely understudied topic and its conceptualizations trafficking in persons has thus far been unsystematic." This underscores my initial comments that much work in left to be done when considering this area of human trafficking.

2.3.8 Child Soldiers

According to the United States Department of Defense,

> The term child soldier is defined in the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 as:
>
> -Any person under 18 years of age who takes direct part in hostilities as a member of governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces;
>
> -Any person under 18 years of age who has been compulsorily recruited into governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces;

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[69] "Criminal Activity & Forced Begging." n.d. Anyonetrafficked.Com. Accessed June 29, 2023. https://www.anyonetrafficked.com/criminal-activity-forced-begging.
[70] Iveta Cherneva, *Human Trafficking for Begging*, 17 Buff. Hum. Rts. L. Rev. 25 (2011). Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/bhrlr/vol17/iss1/2

> -Any person under 15 years of age who has been voluntarily recruited into governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces; or
>
> -Any person under 18 years of age who has been recruited or used in hostilities by armed forces distinct from the armed forces of a state.
>
> Child soldiers are forced to fight but also used as: cooks, porters, messengers, medics, guards, spies, and sex slaves.[71]

Save the Children's Stop the War on Children report reveals terrifying trends about innocent children living and suffering in war zones around the world today. It reports:

> 149 million children – double the number of all children in the U.S. – live in high-intensity conflict zones, areas experiencing thousands of battle-related deaths each year.'[72] Since 2010, there's been a 34% rise in the number of children living in conflict-affected areas, plus a staggering 170% rise in the number of reported grave violations committed against children in conflict. This includes more child soldiers, as well as those more likely to be killed or maimed, abducted, sexually abused, see their schools or hospitals attacked, or have aid denied to them. Children in conflict are more at risk of harm now than at any time in recorded history.[73]

The report goes onto to say that "child soldiers are boys and girls who are often abducted and used as combatants, forced to act as human shields, or conduct executions, deployed as suicide bombers, or used to make or transport explosives."[74] As if that is not horrifying enough, the report goes further and says, "other roles include working as guards, spies, messengers, porters, cooks, or domestic servants. Many children, more often girls, are subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation, while some are forced into child marriage as 'brides' for fighters. Girls forcibly married in this way are frequently abandoned, divorced, or left widowed, if they're not killed or maimed themselves.[75]

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[71] "What Is Trafficking in Persons?" n.d. Accessed February 8, 2023. https://ctip.defense.gov/What-is-TIP/.
[72] "DP05: ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND ... - Census Bureau Table." n.d. Accessed May 29, 2023. https://data.census.gov/table?q=population&g=&hidePreview=false&table=DP05&tid=ACSDP1Y2018.DP05&lastDisplayedRow=39&vintage=2018.
[73] "Child Soldiers: Childhood's End." n.d. Save the Children. Accessed June 11, 2023. https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/child-soldiers.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter we examined the eight different facets of human trafficking. Sex trafficking, labor trafficking, debt bondage, domestic servitude, forced marriage, organ harvesting, forced begging, and child soldiers are all complete violations of human rights. Victims of these violations often experience multiple facets of these crimes. A person trafficking in any form of labor can also experience sexual exploitation by their trafficker. A family held in debt bondage may also be victim of organ harvesting or arranged marriage. The complexity of the crimes including fear, shame, and abuse suffered by the victims, makes it difficult for victims to be identified by law enforcement. Lack of evidence makes trafficking difficult to prosecute in court. Finally, survivors suffer great trauma which impacts their ability to extricate themselves for a tragic situation. Each of these are difficult but necessary realities to recognize as solutions are being created to support and assist victims moving into the future.

Restoration for survivors of trafficking runs deeper than simply putting an end to their exposure to the crime. The shame, trauma, isolation, addiction, and lack of trust and self-worth can leave individuals feeling like they will never be a whole functioning person again. One survivor shared in an effort to numb her pain and shame from years of abuse, the following unintended consequences occurred:

- Pain so deep that it led to my addiction to drugs, alcohol, and painkillers.
- Shoplifting to support my addiction.
- Clouded processing, making abuse from anyone acceptable.
- Boundary lines so blurred that I often don't recognize when someone is a safe person.
- Damaged relationships with my parents and friends.
- Multiple "car wrecks" with paranoia and confusion my constant companion.
- Multiple DUIs and run-ins with law enforcement.

- Unending self-sabotage.[76]

There is only one question to ask – if this were your child or if this were your neighbor, what would you do? Let me remind us all – this is someone's child. They are waiting for good people to show up and remind them of their innate dignity and value as a human being designed and cared for by God. Is that you?

[76] Bowley, Mary Frances. *The White Umbrella: Walking with survivors of sex trafficking*. Chicago. IL: Moody Publishers, 2012. 176.

3. Leviticus, Ruth, Jesus, and Theological Reflections Upon Slavery

Most Christians who have an elementary understanding of the Bible are aware that the Bible repeatedly speaks about caring for vulnerable people. What people might not fully understand is how deep these themes are found in Leviticus and how these speak in a compelling way to human trafficking. A further example of this can be seen by using the book of Ruth as a case study for what might have happened to Ruth if Boaz, a main character in the story, had not had fidelity to the Torah, and specifically the Holiness Code in Leviticus. We will then examine what Jesus had to say about setting the oppressed free in Luke 4, at the beginning of his public ministry. This chapter will conclude by looking at the founder of the Methodist Movement, John Wesley, and his theological convictions around the conversation of slavery in England and America. As an Elder in the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, I connect with Wesley's theological convictions and believe they will help persons of any denomination or faith background theologically reflect further on the conversation of trafficking in our world today.

All people are created in the image of God.[78] In the life of the Church this belief is called the Imago Dei. If all people are created in the image of God, that also means that all people have worth, dignity, and value. When a person is trafficked, the trafficker works day and night to remove their dignity, value, and worth. By threatening them or their loved ones, physically abusing them, demeaning them with verbal and emotional abuse, addicting them to drugs, and selling their bodies for profit – a person slowly loses

[78] Genesis 1:17, NRSVue.

hope and forgets who they are. In this section of the thesis, I will highlight scriptures that underscore God's love for all people, why this conversation matters to God, and how we can see the call God places on Christians to fight against human trafficking - until all are free.

3.1 Leviticus

When most Christians pick up their Bible and want to study the scriptures to draw closer to God, to deepen their relationship with God, or to answer whatever problem they are experiencing in their life that day, rarely, does the person chose Leviticus. Leviticus, amongst most circles I find myself in, is a book of the Bible filled with outdated rules, strange rituals, and can be skimmed quickly or looked past completely. I would argue that this book might be one of the most important in all of Scripture. The book opens with the phrase, "And the Lord called." The Lord was calling Moses from the tent of meeting to speak to him about what the priests were supposed to do. "The rabbinic name for this book is *Torat Kohanim,* a title that can translated to mean 'instruction of [or by] the priests.' This double dimension of the rabbinic title allows us to understand the dual focus of Leviticus: The priesthood is instructed in proper rules for officiating, observing purification, and administering the sanctuary; but the priests also teach the people what God requires of all Israelites."[79] While the first 16 chapters of the book outline these things for the priests, by chapter 17, the tone changes, and it is no longer just about the priests and the sanctuary. Instead, it is about all the people and all the land.

[79] Kaiser, Walker C. Jr. *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. I. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994. 986.

Overall, the first seven chapters present the laws of sacrifice. Chapters eight through 10 concentrate on the priesthood. The focus shifts to matters of purity in chapters 11 through 15. Chapter 16 discusses the Day of Atonement, which was central for the nation of Israel. Chapters 17-27, which are the focus of this thesis, are all about what is called the Holiness Code. Chapter 17 is a prologue for chapters 18-20 which deal with holiness in the family, especially its sexual activity. Chapters 21-25 return to the ritual life of the community with more regulations for priests, Israelite marriages, mourning rites, the holy days, and feasts. Chapter 26 is entitled, "Rewards for Obedience."[80] This chapter is frequently referred to in the prophetic literature. It speaks about either the rewards or punishments for the nation of Israel depending on their obedience or disobedience. The final chapter of Leviticus is an appendix of sorts with final matters to be addressed. Overall, the book outlines a relatively clear structure. The first 16 chapters address the priests, and the final 11 chapters focus on priestly instructions for the people.

A key theme of this book is the notion of holiness. "Holiness to the Lord is a phrase that is repeated 152 times in the book."[81] Leviticus 20:26 shows this concept most clearly. These commands are not just for the priest, but rather for the whole nation. "The laws aim at producing a holy people, a holy nation, who collectively will be a royal priesthood, and a rich treasure belonging to God"[82] Among the many ways they are to do this as a nation, this book singles our sexual holiness for discussion. "Even in the most intimate area, holiness of life demands control and regard for the sanctity of life."[83] Sex

[80] NRSVue.
[81] Kaiser, Walker C. Jr. *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. I. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994. 997.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid, 998

trafficking is a total abuse and rejection of God's vision for humanity. When a person is sold for sex, is physically assaulted, raped by another person, or is forced to preform sexual acts – it is a distortion of what God had intended sex to look like. It is a perversion of something that is meant to be holy.

Chapters 18 to 20 in Leviticus form a distinct section of the Holiness Code. They outline four areas where holiness must be observed. "Chapters 18 and 19 contain moral prohibitions, while chapter 20 has more penal sanctions."[84] Chapter 18 leaves no room for question that sex is reserved between a man and a woman who have entered into the covenant of marriage with one another. Anything outside of this is unholy and the person(s) would be considered unclean. When connecting this to sex trafficking, Leviticus, and in turn, God, explicitly states is in no uncertain terms that this is inappropriate, not allowed, and unacceptable.[85]

Chapter 19 discusses social ethics. God addresses several things the people should and should not do. Verses 3 through 8 set forth two duties for social and religious life. They are honoring one's parents and having reverence to God. The ten commandments are reiterated in different ways in this chapter as well. They are stated again to further reinforce a practical illustration of what the commandments look like in the everyday lives of the people.

Verses 9-18 then lean into the social ethics. These verses are key for the next section when studying the story of Ruth. Verses 9 and 10 which say, "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the

[84] Ibid, 1123.
[85] In my comments on chapters 18-20 I am offering a literal reading of the text and connecting it to sex trafficking. I am not offering comments about any LGBTQAI+ issues.

gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God."[86] These verses remind the people that the land and everything in it, including the people, belong to God. God commands the landowners to leave the edges of their vineyards or fields with food on them for travelers or aliens in their land. If a person wanted to be holy in their work and life, this was one of the ways God commanded them to do so.

Verses 11 through 14 introduce another set of rules for holiness. It says:

> **11** You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. **12** And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord. **13** "You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. **14** You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

The use of fraud or coercion to oppress the wage earner or helpless person is opposed by God. The Deuteronomic law takes up the same case in Deuteronomy 24:14-15 which says, "You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise, they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt." The prophets speak boldly against such injustice as well in Isaiah 3:14-15 which says, "The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts." Jerimiah also speaks to this when he proclaims, "Thus says the Lord: act with justice and

[86] Leviticus 19:9-10, NRSVue.

righteousness and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place."[87] All throughout the Old Testament, God uses God's people to call out the wickedness of force, fraud, or coercion. Is it not interesting that the definition of human trafficking uses those same three words? God abhors this behavior and modern-day followers of Jesus should as well.

There are a few verses in this chapter that cause the reader to raise their eyebrows and ask, "If God is against all of these things and speaks so much about sex in chapter 18, why is it seemingly okay for a slave owner to have intercourse with one of their slaves?" This is a valid question and requires an explanation. Is becomes even more concerning when God says in Deuteronomy 22:23-24, "If a man is discovered lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman. So, you shall purge the evil from Israel." These two passages are also connected to Exodus 21:1-11 which is entitled, "The Law Concerning Slaves."[88] All of these scriptures have a common thread. They all talk about laws surrounding slaves, but they do not address the institution of slavery directly. For many, this is troubling. Instead, these passages talk about the harm that is being done to someone else's property. For example, in Leviticus, since the slave woman in question has already been promised a free man, a guilt offering of a ram must be sacrificed at the tent of meeting. God clearly calls this a sin. And yet, since sexual intercourse does not take place with a betrothed free

[87] Jeremiah 22:3 NRSVue
[88] NRSVue

woman, the death penalty is not imposed as it is described in Deuteronomy. S.H. Kellogg's comment on this verse helps the reader understand more deeply. He writes,

> By thus appointing herein a penalty for both the guilty parties such as the public conscience would approve, God taught the Hebrew the fundamental lesson that a slave-girl is not regarded as a mere chattel: and that if, because of the hardness of their hearts, concubinage was tolerated for a time, still the slave-girl must not be treated as a thing, but a person, and indiscriminate license could not be permitted.[89]

It is frustrating that while this command grants some recognition of humanity to slaves it does not address the institution of slavery itself. I have always wondered what the human story would have looked like, especially in America, if God had spoken more directly and plainly about the unholiness and atrocity that slavery is. What would history and the present day look like if slavery had been forbidden from the earliest of days in human history? How different would our society and world be?

Chapter 20 discusses worship practices and familial relations. Many of these verses are repetitive from earlier chapters depicting their importance to God. These sanctions are meant to guide the nation of Israel in their daily lives as they pursue holiness. If they want to honor God, there are certain things they must do. If they do not abide, they will be punished. Gordon Wenham offers five principles from this text for contemporary application:

1. The offender must receive the legal desert.
2. Purging evil from one's midst cannot refer to the offense itself, which could not be undone, but to the guilt that rested on the land and its inhabitants.
3. Punishment is meant to deter others from committing the offense (see also Deut. 13:11, 17:13, and 21:21).
4. Punishment allows the offender to make atonement and to be reconciled with society.
5. The punishment allows the offender to recompense the injured party rather than repay the state.[90]

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[89] S.H. Kellogg, *The Book of Leviticus*, 3rd ed. Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978; reprinrt of A. C. Aromstrong and Son, 1899). 405-6.
[90] Wenham, "Excursus I: Principles of Punishment in the Pentateuch,'" in *Leviticus*, 281-86.

I wonder if these principles still carry the weight in the modern day as they did in the biblical times. On one hand, the victim receives a small measure of justice for what has been done to them. On another hand, slavery is so reprehensible that it is difficult to find compassion and forgiveness for the perpetrators of the crime. Scripture continues to reveal itself in the words of Jesus, a person is not to forgive seven times, but seven times seventy times.[91] It is also worth noting that in today's society, the Trafficking Victim's Protection Act speaks to mandatory restitution. This is the idea that a victim is entitled to the lost wages while they were being trafficked. Ambassador (ret.) Susan Coppedge said, "It is a concept that is not even fully implemented within the legal world yet. For example, if a victim made the trafficker $40,000 from sex or forced labor. We calculate the wages they should have earned, and then they are awarded that sum at the conclusion of the trial."[92]

Leviticus 21-24 continues to outline, explain, and detail several important aspects of the Holiness Code. Chapter 21 is about holiness in the priesthood, 22 is about the holiness in sacrificial offerings, 23 is about holiness in observing the festivals, 24 is about holiness being contrasted. It is a unique chapter as it begins by discussing rules of the holy place and then seemingly is interrupted by a story of a blasphemer in verses 10-23. After this section of the Holiness Code, we arrive to chapter 25, which is where the key findings can be found for our primary topic of discussion.

Robert North organizes four lessons that might be learned from Leviticus 25. He writes:

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[91] Matthew 18:21-22 NRSVue.
[92] Coppedge, Susan. Phone conversation on 9/19/23.

1. Jubilee was intended to prevent the accumulation of all the wealth of a nation into the hands of a few. Under the jubilee law, every Israelite's freedom and legal right to family land were guaranteed. Once in the lifetime of every generation (every fifty years), what might have been lost through debts could be recovered in the jubilee year.
2. The jubilee, as one of the sabbath years, was an extension of the sabbath day. It joined together the concerns of religion and society into one.
3. Love and justice toward one's neighbor lay at the heart of the jubilee legislation… Persons who place their priorities right by seeking first God's Kingdom and righteousness will find all the other cares managed by their Lord.
4. The word release in Leviticus 25:10 points to the words used in Isaiah 61:1, which is read by Jesus from the scroll in the synagogue in Luke 4:16-21. The reference to the 'year of our Lord's favor' is that same Isaiah passage is probably an allusion to the jubilee year principle.[93]

Each of these observations point to a society and world where all persons could be free, live a life of freedom, and could flourish together as one society where there is no monopoly on power, resources, or people. God's design intended for there to be a year of rest every seven years, for both the land and the people. It was a year that could have potentially changed everything if the people would have ever followed God's command to Moses when he was on Mount Sinai. At the core of this outline for society is a reality that John Bright summarizes so well when he writes on Leviticus 25:

> The land is God's and that we live on this earth as aliens and sojourners, holding all that we have as it were on loan from him. That God narrowly superintends every business transition and expect we conduct our affairs in the fear of him by dealing graciously with the less fortunate brother in the recollection that we have all been recipients of grace![94]

When a person buys sex, forces someone to work for no pay, or robs a person of their daily wage, they are playing the role of God in another person's life. God strictly prohibits such a behavior.[95] To go further, every time someone feels like they have power over another person, it is a perversion of the Holiness Code. All people are created equal and in the image of God. We are on this earth for a temporary moment. God created humans to be in relationship with God.[96] God has also called us to steward and care for

[93] North, Robert. *Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1954) 213-31.
[94] Bright, John. *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville, Abington, 1967) 153.
[95] Leviticus 25 NRSVue.
[96] Genesis 1:16 NRSVue.

the land and one another.[97] Since the earliest of times, humanity has failed time and time again at following these commands and the outlines for society that God provided. The hard truth is that sin is at the root of it all. Sin is anything that separates us from God, and the abuse of another human certainly carries that mark.

There are three primary forms of exploitation in which traffickers' prey on their victims. The first is vulnerability often affected by societal inequities such as violence, abuse, poor education, substance misuse, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, or isolation. The second is victimization. This occurs when someone is coerced, deceived, forced, or otherwise subject to an abuse of power. This can look like false job opportunities, grooming, or being sold by a family member into labor or sex trafficking. Finally, there is revictimization. This is when a survivor exits a trafficking situation, but the resulting trauma combined with the original unresolved risk factors perpetuates the likelihood of being re-exploited, continuing the cycle of trafficking. Christians must combat all these means of exploitation.

The Holiness Codes in Leviticus 19 were created by God to establish the ways God's chosen people were to be separated from sin, set apart as God's people, and live a holy life to bring honor and glory to God. The codes outline how to protect the land, its people, and especially the most vulnerable among them. Human trafficking victims are some of the world's most vulnerable persons. Traffickers most often prey on the weak and vulnerable, which is who God intended to protect with the commands given in Leviticus 19. This work is prophetic because it casts a vision of the future where all persons are set free to be who God created them to be. If every person is created in the

[97] Genesis 2:15 NRSVue.

image of God, and resembles who God is, then forcing, tricking, or luring others into trafficking cannot continue. This cannot be the outcome God wants for God's people. This work is on a global scale as persons continue to fight for liberty until everyone is set free.

Prophetically teaching and preaching about trafficking is vital in my context because Florida, and especially Southwest Florida, is ranked third in the highest number of cases in the United States.[98] There is trafficking happening in every state across our country.[99] In a modern-day society where laws are developed on a weekly basis for the betterment of society, one must wonder how the number of trafficked persons continues to increase so rapidly. How is it possible that this is happening in our world, right before our eyes? As I reflect on being prophetic in my own context, preaching on human trafficking rises to the surface. How is it possible that the church is not more engaged in fighting the good fight to end slavery? Perhaps, the reason is because Scripture never specifically says that slavery is evil or sinful. There are over two hundred verses in Scripture that allude or discuss slavery in some way. Many of these passages recognize it exists, but they do not call for its abolition. We cannot change Scripture, but can we learn from the past as we look towards the future? Could we see the horrors of the past and work diligently to create a better, safer, and more free future?

The hermeneutics used by Christians in the past are still often used today. A truth is that "Christians, throughout history, have relied on direct quotations from the Old and

[98] Statistics come from The Polaris Project. *Myths, facts, and statistics*. Polaris. (2021, April 20). Retrieved September 28, 2021, from https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/.
[99] "National Statistics." National Human Trafficking Hotline. Accessed July 18, 2023. https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics.

New Testaments to justify slavery as a normal event, and that God never punished even God's most faithful servant Abraham who had slaves."[100] This has been a difficult reality, but "the other side of the argument comes from those same scriptures but that are interpreted in a different way, and often in correlation with Jesus' precepts like the Golden Rule."[101] Each of these narratives must be held in tension. In our modern day, the topic of biblical interpretation still remains at the forefront of many Christian discussions. Persons in the history of the United States and around the world have widely debated if slavery is part of God's plan for the world. In 1857, George Armstrong, a prominent Presbyterian minister from Virginia wrote, "Where God has appointed a work for his church, he has generally appointed the way also in which that work is to be done."[102] For Armstrong, the way this work was to be done was through the slave trade. Armstrong believed that this was the way Christ and his apostles dealt with slavery. In response to Jesus' other teachings that might not be compatible with his theory he says the church's role is not in determining the legality of slavery, but to "make good masters and good slaves."[103] This is just one example of how the perversion of Scripture can bring violence and suffering to millions of people, both in the past and in the present.

Leviticus 19 is the only time when God tells Moses to speak directly to the entire Israelite community.[104] The main theme of this chapter and most of the book, is the

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[100] Bow, J. D. B. "Slavery and the Bible." In *The Southern States, Embracing a Series of Papers Condensed from the Earlier Volumes of De Bow's Review, upon the Cultivation, Commerce and Manufacture of Cotton, Together with Historical and Statistical Sketches of Several of the Southern and South-weste*. Vol. 4. New Orleans, Louisiana, 1856. 282.
[101] Grimke, Angelina. *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South*. New York: Arno Press, 1838. 223.
[102] Armstrong, George D. *The Christian Doctrine of Slavery*. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969. 239.
[103] Ibid., 240.
[104] *CSB Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2015. *185.*

imperative to be holy. To be holy is to be set apart for God's own use. It is important for Israel to be holy, "because I, the Lord your God, am Holy."[105] This command connects to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament.[106] Throughout the thirty-seven verses found in chapter 19, God says, "I am the Lord, or I am the Lord your God," ten times. This emphasizes that God was the author of these holiness laws as well as the rationale for them. This chapter also connects its moral, civil, and religious commands to the ten commandments. "This is not a means to revise or edit the Decalogue, but rather, a reinforcement and practical illustration of it."[107]

Many of the commands God gives in this chapter are significant, and they continue to carry forward in Scripture. One example is Boaz obeying the commandment to not reap the very edge of his land, which allows Ruth to glean after the reapers have finished their work.[108] In verse 14, God highlights the importance of not abusing the blind or the deaf. Then attention is given to how to deal with difficult neighbors in the community. Up until this point, there is nothing alarming for the modern reader in this chapter. Then, we read verses 20-22:

> If a man has sexual relations with a woman who is a slave, designated for another man but not ransomed or given her freedom, an inquiry shall be held. They shall not be put to death, since she has not been freed; but he shall bring a guilt offering for himself to the Lord, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, a ram as guilt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of guilt offering before the Lord for his sin that he committed; and the sin he committed shall be forgiven him.[109]

Is a ram worth it to God? Is this really all that is required of a man who exploits and rapes a slave? How can this passage be elevated and in between commands about merging

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[105] Leviticus 19:2, NRSVue.
[106] Matthew 5 says, "Be Perfect … as your heavenly Father is perfect."
[107] Kaiser, Walker C. Jr. *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. I. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994. 1131.
[108] Ruth 2:8-9, NRSVue.
[109] NRSVue.

types of seeds or garments, or what types of tress and fruits can be planted in new land? Surely, there is more to uncover about this passage.

This passage is like one found in Exodus 21:7-8 where a man has intercourse with a free woman. In that case they are both guilty and liable for capital punishment.[110] The difference in Leviticus 19 is that God is now speaking for the woman who has been promised to another but has not yet been given her freedom. "Instead of dealing with slavery as a whole – the law focuses solely of the issue of inflicting harm on someone else's property. Since the woman in question has already been promised to a free man, a guilt offering of a ram must be sacrificed at the tent of the meeting."[111] God calls this behavior sin. It is sin. There can be no debate that it is not.

As a United Methodist, I believe in personal and social holiness. John Wesley held up this chapter, and particularly verse 18, one of the key examples of social holiness. "God is social, the personal tri-unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Humans are social, created in God's social image.[112] Holiness concerns God-ordained relationships among people, God, and the land. These all constitute our environment for serving God."[113] If we are to participate and spread holiness across the world, we must be ready to roll up our sleeves and join in with whatever God is doing in the world. I believe God is at work helping to eradicate a millenniums old travesty known as slavery. How can passages like this be utilized to speak prophetically about trafficking occurring on our watches today?

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[110] Deuteronomy 22:23-24, NRSVue.
[111] Kaiser, Walker C. Jr. *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. I. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994. 1134.
[112] Genesis 1:26-28, NRSVue.
[113] *Wesley Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Abingdon 2009. Footnote, 146.

I would suggest we read a few chapters ahead to Leviticus 25 where God instructs the nation of Israel to observe a year of sabbath rest every seven years and year of jubilee every 50 years.[114] The purpose of these years was to create liberty for God's people. John Wesley's first open-air sermon came from Luke 4, but it was grounded in Leviticus 25. If we, as modern-day prophets, want to experience the "Spirit of the Lord… to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and to let the oppressed go free," we need to seek political, spiritual, and economic liberation for all persons. God's command in Leviticus 25 is a framework for how the poor can be liberated from poverty. It is a command that slaves should be freed from their chains, and captives of all kinds should know the freedom that only the Triune God can give. When reflecting on the significance of this chapter's commands, the question then must be addressed: why did God even allow the Israelites to purchase slaves at all?

Under Hebrew laws, slaves were treated differently from slaves in other nations. They were seen as human beings with dignity, and not as animals. Hebrews slaves, for example, took part in the religious festivals and rested on the sabbath. Nowhere does the Bible condone slavery, but it recognizes its existence. God's laws instead, "offered many guidelines for treating slaves properly."[115] While these guidelines are a great starting place, they do not achieve what I believe God wants from humanity. I would argue that we, as followers of Christ, should strive for every person to be free from slavery. Leviticus 25:17 says, "you are not to cheat each other." How does one accomplish this when a human being, created in the image of God is being sold, abused, or forced to work

[114] A hymn by Charles Wesley entitled, "Blow Ye Trumpet, Blow" connects to this passage of Scripture.
[115] *New Living Translation Study Bible*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Incorporated, 2011. 192.

against their will? If Scripture commands us to not cheat one another, how can we even begin to comprehend the notion of cheating another person of their free will which was God's gift to us?

I am convinced that the Church needs to step up, call out the powers and principalities at work in enabling trafficking to continue, and join the fight in ending human trafficking once and for all. In the past, whenever the Church has made a commitment to fight for something worthwhile, I believe it has always succeeded in some way. God created the Holiness Code to protect the most vulnerable in society. God then used the people to carry these commands out. I believe God is continuing to ask us to stand up for what is right. In the coming years, my prayer is that leaders of all types will begin to prophetically teach and preach about trafficking, so that we can shine a light on its impact on our world.

The Holiness Code continues with chapter 26 which is referred to the blessings and curses chapter, which is often connected to chapter 28-30 in the book of Deuteronomy. "These three chapters were quoted or alluded to literally hundreds of times by the four major and the 12 minor prophets.[116] This chapter mimics several other chapters in the Holiness Code where God says, "I am the Lord your God" (26: 1, 2, 13, 44, 45). Just like Leviticus 19, there are two uses of the phrase in the beginning and two at the end of the chapter, with one usage in the middle separating the blessings from the curses. "The first two verses of this chapter summarize the first four commandments of the Decalogue and, therefore, rehearse in a nutshell a person's whole duty to God."[117]

[116] Kaiser, Walker C. Jr. *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. I. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994. 1178
[117] Ibid.

Verses 3-13 offer six blessings for obedience to God, And verses 14-39 offer six curses for those who are disobedient. The chapter ends with a promise from God for future restoration and a concluding summary. This chapter is foundational for the prophetic literature, and, because of that, it is safe to assume that Boaz would have known it well. This is a chapter that reminds all people what will occur if they are obedient, or disobedient to God. It is a chapter that reminds us that God is God, and we are not.

The conclusion of the Holiness Code comes in chapter 27, which is often described as an epilogue centered around entire dedication to the Lord. The chapter to some feels like an anticlimactic ending to the book as a whole, especially after the powerful words of chapter 26. Yet, it speaks a great deal about the types of vows that a person can make. A takeaway could be making a vow to God not to participate in human trafficking and to work to end it in your lifetime. In an effort to make scripture come alive and feel real every day, this vow could convict and empower you simultaneously to do the good work that God has called you to do. If God has called you to do it, surely God will also give you all that you need to see it through. God will bless you and use you to be a blessing to others should you choose to use your voice and platform to fight human trafficking in your community and around the world.

In this last many pages, I have outlined and observed how the book of Leviticus, and specifically chapters 17-27 which are called the Holiness Code, call modern day Christians to fight against human trafficking. All of this exegetical work has been done to now present a biblical case study of what the Holiness Code looks like in real time and in practice via the book of Ruth. We turn now to the book of Ruth and see how the actions of Boaz fulfill the words we have just studied. I will highlight how these commands of

God saved Ruth's live, and eventually led to the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

3.2 Ruth

In today's world, famine, climate change, and wars cause people to flee their homes, oftentimes right into the hands of traffickers. The book of Ruth serves as a source for examining how famine and loss of family members almost caused Ruth to be sold into a life of slavery and how Boaz's fidelity to the torah prevented this outcome. Boaz is a righteous man who follows what Leviticus describes several times throughout this book. From his actions and by the end of the story we can see the blessing of God in his life.

In this section I will offer theological reflections on the book of Ruth. By studying the story, we learn that without those faithful to God, Ruth might have found herself in a situation of trafficking like so many millions of others around the world have found themselves in. The reason she did not end in that situation is because of other persons in the story who supported, aided, and helped her. Their names are Naomi, who is her mother-in-law, and Boaz, her Kinsman redeemer.

Dr. Ellen Davis notes in *Opening Israel's Scriptures* that "the book of Ruth is often regarded as a children's story, or perhaps, a romance; countless visual and literary artist have betrayed Ruth as a fetching figure 'amid the alien corn,' attracting Boaz with her supposed beauty – although that is never mentioned in the book."[118] She continues this line of thinking by saying, "the story is better viewed as a tragedy redeemed; in that

[118] Davis, Ellen F. *Opening Israel's Scriptures*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 166.

sense, it is a miniature of the whole biblical story and both testaments." In just this one story of one family, the richness of all in Scripture is revealed to the reader. The reader can feel connected to God because of how connected God is to this family, just as God is deeply connected with each family that God has created. Davis continues by saying,

> Moreover, tragedy, here, and elsewhere in the Bible is redeemed in the most unlikely way: through the deliberate embrace of one's own vulnerability. In her decision to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem, Ruth becomes in her own person, not only a widow, but also an orphan (having no father or other adult male in the household to protect her) and a *sojourner*. Thus, she embodies and embraces the three classical biblical categories of vulnerability of those in need of protection within covenant community. As we shall see, Ruth is the first of the several 'vulnerable protectors' in this book.[119]

The story of Ruth is the story of so many victims of human trafficking. Often victims of trafficking have one terrible thing happen in their life, and it changes everything for them. Ruth had multiple horrible things happen in her life, and because of faithful followers of God, she was saved. This leads me to say again, until faithful followers of God in our world today step up to help, more people will continue to fall into the wicked web of trafficking.

For example, in Ruth's story, it is stated that she is a Moabite woman, someone who was an outsider. Davis notes, "In Torah, Moabite women are viewed as a threat to Israel's own religious loyalty (Numbers 25); Deuteronomy firmly forbids the entry of any Moabites into the covenant community of Israel."[120] By being an outsider, or someone not from the culture of the community she finds herself in she would have been vulnerable. Often trafficked individuals do not even know they are being trafficked or tricked because they do not have anyone advocating for them or watching over them. They are simply on their own and doing their best. Unfortunately, traffickers know this,

[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.

and they cleverly prey on those facing vulnerabilities such as Ruth. Oftentimes victims just like Ruth face homelessness, lack of financial resources, and need food. Traffickers are oftentimes smarter than anyone would like to admit.

Ruth's story happens fast. In the first chapter, we hear about Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons.[121] After a famine hits their home of Bethlehem, translated to mean, The House of Bread, they are forced to leave their home and travel to a new land called Moab.[122] When they arrive, Elimelech dies. Luckily for Naomi, she still has two sons, and they marry two Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth.[123] Just one verse later, 10 years pass by, and both of the sons die as well.[124] This leaves Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth extremely vulnerable with no providers, in that time men, in their day-to-day life to care for them and protect them. Naomi then hears that the famine has ended in Bethlehem and the three of them prepare to head home.[125]

It is while they are on that journey one of the most famous scenes in Scripture takes places. Naomi out of great love tells her two daughters-in-law to leave her, go back to their families, and to start again.[126] After many tears are shed, Orpah ultimately leaves.[127] Ruth responds to Naomi's request by saying, "Do not press me to leave you, to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus to me, and more as well, if even death parts

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[121] Ruth 1:1-2, NRSVue.
[122] Piper, John. "Bethlehem: House of Bread." Desiring God, April 8, 1981. https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/bethlehem-house-of-bread.
[123] Ruth 1:4, NRSVue.
[124] Ruth 1:5, NRSVue.
[125] Ruth 1:6-7, NRSVue.
[126] Ruth 1:7-9, NRSVue.
[127] Ruth 1:14, NRSVue.

me from you!"[128] Stunned by this proclamation, Naomie's response was to say nothing, and continue the journey.[129]

This declaration by Ruth shows us a great deal about her character. There is perhaps no woman in the Bible whose character we know more about. As readers, we are blessed to know these details of who she is. It is because of this I am also reminded that each person who is a victim of trafficking has a story and is created in the image of God. Each victim of trafficking has things about them that make them lovable and special as well, and yet, because of greed or violence, someone else has done their best to take it away from them. Thankfully, that is not how Ruth's story goes.

Instead, Naomi comes up with a plan for Ruth to go out into the fields and glean the harvest. By chance, as they arrived back in Bethlehem, it was the festival of barely harvest, and the food was abundant.[130] In chapter 2, Ruth goes out into the field and begins to collect food, but it does not take long before she is noticed by Boaz, the landowner, who was kin to Elimelech.[131] He asks his other workers who she is. After discovering the answer, he approaches her, gives her work, something to eat and drink, and protection while she works. He also tells her to not travel to any other field, but to stay with him and his workers as he has told them to leave her alone.[132] Boaz knew that the working fields were not the typical place for a woman in his day. He knew that Ruth was vulnerable and new to this type of work. He also knew the type of people in the field

[128] Ruth 1:16-17, NRSVue.
[129] Ruth 1:18, NRSVue.
[130] Ruth 1:22, NRSVue.
[131] Ruth 2:4-7, NRSVue.
[132] Ruth 2:8-9, NRSVue.

that might wish to do her harm. Boaz used his intellect and the blessings he had been giving to help keep Ruth, and in turn, Naomi, safe.

Ruth 2:10 then says, "Then she (Ruth) fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a *foreigner*?" Davis points out another important reality of this exchange. She writes, "Boaz has crossed an important, social boundary, between the native-born and the immigrant. From a position of power, he has taken an initiative to strengthen the position of the one who is clearly invisible."[133] This shows us Boaz's faithfulness to God by treating others as he himself would like to be treated. Without Boaz's protection and resources, Ruth and Naomi could have found themselves in a desperate situation, just as so many others find themselves in desperate situations in our world today, but with no one to help them or to offer them sustenance.

In chapter 3, Naomi comes up with a plan for Ruth to visit Boaz after the day's work is over. She was told to lie down next to him and uncover his feet and tell him who she is. When he finally woke up, he was shocked and had a few questions. Ruth asks him to be their family redeemer.[134] A family redeemer is a person who marries a widow in their family so as to not leave them vulnerable while carrying on the deceased husband's name. We read about this is Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Boaz agrees but says there is one relative who is related more closely to her than to him, so he will talk to him the next day. They go back to sleep, and she leaves early the next morning and reports back to Naomi what will happen.[135]

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[133] Davis, Ellen F. *Opening Israel's Scriptures*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 168.
[134] Ruth 3:1-9, NRSVue.
[135] Ruth 3:12-18, NRSVue.

In the final and forth chapter, Boaz meets the man at the town gate who slated to be the kinsman redeemer and gathers 10 witnesses, which was the custom of the day.[136] In their conversation, the slated kinsman redeemer discusses his interest in Elimelech's land but did not realize purchasing this land would also mean he was to take on Elimelech's daughter in law, Ruth, as his wife. When that is said to him, he fears for his own estate and family, and tells Boaz he can buy the land and in turn, marry Ruth.[137] After the transaction was complete, we read in verse 13 that Boaz married Ruth. Shortly after she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Naomi was thrilled to be a grandmother and care for the little boy, who they named Obed.

Davis writes, "Obed's name means 'one who serves.' It is a modest name in this book of modest people, a hopeful name suggesting selfless loyalty."[138] She makes a brilliant observation next. She writes, "set against the spectacular failures and steadily declining faithfulness in the days of the judges, this short story portrays what Karl Barth calls 'the simplicity of comprehensiveness of grace.' It shows how the future opens up from the faithful, small-scale actions of three ordinary people, each of them serving the needs, spoken and unspoken, of the other." Is that not at the heart of fighting against the forces of evil and wickedness in the world? The focus of this entire thesis is working to convince people from every walk of life that faithful and small actions of ordinary people can make a difference when we speak up and fight for the other. In this case, the other, is persons who are trafficked. It can also mean anyone who finds themselves in a place that nobody would want to be. Ruth's story gives us a glimpse into what our society and

[136] Ruth 4:1-3, NRSVue.
[137] Ruth 4:4-12, NRSVue.
[138] Ibid, 171.

world could have looked like if all people had the commitment to God that Boaz, Naomi, and Ruth did.

It is a powerful story and one that speaks volumes to us living in the world today. Boaz was a man of faith. As a man of faith, he abided by certain rules God had laid out for the people of Israel. We read about these rules for living in Leviticus 19, the Holiness Code. It is spoken directly by God to the people of Israel. It was to be the standard for their personal conduct towards not only themselves, but everyone they met. The codes included regulation for clean eating, ritual sacrifice, sexual purity, appropriate conduct towards foreigners and workers. The story of Ruth took place during the time of the judges. The judges were there because many of the people no longer abided by these laws, but Boaz did. It is because of this that Ruth and Naomi were saved. The reason Boaz allowed for gleaners to come onto his land was because of the command God gave the people in Leviticus 19:9. Boaz was caring for those in need and vulnerable through this small act of kindness which led him to meet Ruth. Traffickers and evil people alike prey on the weak and the vulnerable. Ruth and Naomi, with no husbands or sons, no food, and just the land, that they could not work alone, were the definition of vulnerable. Naomi knew this when she said to Ruth in verse 22, "Do as he says. Stay with his workers right through the whole harvest. You will be safe there, unlike in other fields."

I wonder, if a person of faith like Boaz, had not come along – what would have happened to Ruth? What would have happened to Naomi? If they were desperate enough for food, would they have taken a job that promised good wages, but turned out to be brutal hours and little to no pay? Would Ruth be trapped into a life of prostitution because a man took advantage of her vulnerability and tough situation? Instead, because

of a person of faith, her story ended as one of hope. She was not only saved but was able to leave a legacy. I wonder, is the Church a place that is full of Boaz's today? Are each of us Christians living into our biblical command to care for the widow, the orphan, the vulnerable, the trafficked?

Boaz is a hero. In his dealing with other people, he was always sensitive to their needs. His words to his employees, relatives, and others were marked with kindness. He offered help openly, not begrudgingly. When he discovered who Ruth was, he took several steps to help her even before he knew her because she had been faithful to his relative Naomi. When Naomi advised Ruth to request his protection, he was ready to marry her if the legal complication could be worked out.

Boaz not only did what was right; he also did it right away. Of course, he could not foresee all that his actions would accomplish. He could have not known that the child he would have by Ruth would be an ancestor to David and Jesus. He only met the challenge of taking the right action in the situation facing him. Each of us is faced with challenges each day. The question for us is this, do we make the easy choice, or do we make the right one, even if it costs us more or is challenging? The book of Ruth ends with a short genealogy that shows us Obed became the father of Jesse, who was the father of none other than King David – and Jesus was born of the line of King David. This leads us now to studying what Jesus had to say about slavery when he walked the earth, and what Jesus would say about modern day trafficking. All throughout Scripture, God calls God's people to protect and care for the vulnerable and weak. Trafficking victims fall directly into the category of humanity that God has come to love and save. This work is done through the Church, its people, and the greater society working together for good.

3.3 Jesus

In Luke 4, Jesus stands up in the synagogue of his hometown, is handed a scroll from Isaiah, and begins to read it before the people. These words set the tone for the remainder of his earthly ministry. It is helpful to remember what happens before this event occurs. In Luke 1, we read of the foretelling and birth of John the Baptist, the foretelling of the birth of Jesus, we read about Mary's visit to Elizabeth, Mary's song, and Zechariah's prophecy. In the second chapter we read of Jesus' birth, his dedication at the temple, and a story about when he was 12 years old and was teaching at the temple, rather than traveling home with his family after the Passover celebration.

Chapter three speaks in more detail about the ministry of John the Baptist preparing the way for his cousin, Jesus. Once Jesus arrives, they go down to the Jordan River and Jesus is baptized. At that moment, Luke 3: 21-22 tell us, "Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'" Jesus was baptized, we are then given a lengthy family tree that led to Jesus, in which we see the names of Obed, Jesse, and Boaz.

Immediately following his baptism, chapter 4 begins with a statement of what his first act is. Chapter 4 verse 1 tells us, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tested by the devil." It was a time of preparation, prayer, fasting, and testing. It was one in which Jesus successfully defeated the devil's antics. This story can be read in full in chapter 4 verses 1-13. Once the 40 days ended, verses 14 and 15 tell us, **"**then Jesus, in the power

of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding regions. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone."

Being praised by everyone did not last for long though. One day, after traveling around the region, he returned to his hometown of Nazareth and went to the synagogue he was raised in. The following scene begins in Luke 4:16 which says:

> When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

At this moment, Jesus has read from Isaiah 61, but he interestingly does not read the whole chapter. Isaiah 61 says the following:

> The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me;
> he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes,
> the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
> They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
>
> They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations;
> they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks; foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines, but you shall be called priests of the Lord; you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. Because their shame was double and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot, therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs.
>
> For I, the Lord, love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
>
> I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my whole being shall exult in my God,
> for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots and as a garden causes what is

> sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Jesus only reads the first 2 verses of Isaiah 61 rather than the whole chapter. According to R. Alan Culpepper, in these types of situations, "there was usually more than one reader, and each was expected to read at least three verses…Luke's description of Jesus' finding the place where the verse quotes from Isaiah occur probably means that Luke understood that Jesus himself chose this passage."[139] After reading what Jesus said in Luke 4, and what is written in Isaiah 61, it is necessary to compare the two to see what else Jesus omitted from his reading and what he emphasized. Luke almost certainly arranged his account to convey a certain understanding to the reader.

> The Lukan modifications are indicated in italics: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. [Luke omits: to bind up the brokenhearted] He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blond, *to let the oppressed go free* [from Isaiah 58:6], *and to proclaim* the year of the Lord's favor.'[140]

Luke is telling the reader that Jesus has four different initiatives as he starts his public ministry. These occur after his birth, dedication, childhood, teenage years, baptism, and being tempted in the wilderness. Culpepper comments that "Jesus' four plans for his ministry are to bring good news, to proclaim, to let go free, and to proclaim. The threefold repetition of *me* also underscores the role of this passage as a description of Jesus' ministry."[141] These verses also connect to the first two beatitudes in the Sermon of the Mount that we read in the gospel of Matthew chapter 5:2-3. It is worth noting that in Matthew's gospel, the temptation story occurs in chapter 4, Jesus recruits the first disciples, and then he preaches the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew records a similar

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[139] Culpepper, R. Alan. *The New Interpreter's Bible volume IX*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995. 105.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.

theme at the beginning of his ministry. A connection to this story is also seen in Mark 6 when Jesus teaches in his hometown synagogue. The synoptic gospels all highlight the importance of Jesus's initiatives and plans for his ministry in the beginning of their gospels.

The end of this story from Luke 4 begins in verse 21 once Jesus began to interpret what he has read. It tells us:

> Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.' And he said, 'Truly I tell you; no prophet is accepted in his hometown. …When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

For simply outlining the plans for his ministry, the people from his hometown try to kill him by throwing him off a cliff! This is foreshadowing for what the remainder of his public ministry will look like as well. While many hear and believe, countless others did not. Jesus would continue to face troubles and persecution for the remainder of his days on earth for preaching a message of liberation from bondage and oppression.

One final comment to include in this section stems from Culpepper's observations about Jesus including the proclamation of the year of the Lord's favor. He writes, "Isaiah 61 is connected with the Jubilee year legislation in Leviticus 25. Following a series of seven sevens, the fiftieth year was to be a time when 'you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants' (Leviticus 25:10)."[142] He continues by saying, "it has occasionally been suggested that Jesus was actually proclaiming the observance of

[142] Ibid, 106.

the jubilee year through his reading of Isaiah 61, but this is far from certain. More likely it is the interpretation that Jesus related the figure of 'the year of the Lord's favor' to the Kingdom of God in Luke 4:42."[143] Culpepper concludes by stating, "Jesus' ministry signaled that the time for the liberation of the impoverished and oppressed had come, and in that respect at least his work would fulfill the ideal and the social concern of the Jubilee year."[144] This message is one that still needs to be preached today.

It is interesting to note that Jesus' public ministry begins with a reading from a prophet who was quoting from the Torah. Jesus was the true fulfillment of all that had come before him. The reign of the Kingdom of God was and is at hand, and Jesus calls all of his followers to fight for the liberation of those who are in bondage. A person's bondage may be economic, physical, political, or demonic - and Jesus has come to set all persons free. This includes victims of human trafficking. Jesus' early ministry begins with preaching and teaching about the coming of God's reign and how the prophet's voice has been fulfilled in him. These verses connect to our previous two sections of the Holiness Code in Leviticus 17-27 and the story of Ruth. All of these examples show one common thread: Jesus is on the side of the outcast, the marginalized, the oppressed, the immigrant, the poor, and the prisoner. All these terms apply to victims of human trafficking. All of Scripture shows how God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit cares for the weak and vulnerable. If the Triune God cares about all individuals, who are created in God's image, then I believe with every part of me that God wants us to care for our fellow human beings as well. In this next section, we will see how the

[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.

early Methodists did, and did not, do this work well with respect to slavery in the past few centuries.

3.4 A United Methodist Perspective

As an Elder in The United Methodist Church, I would be remiss if I did not add to this thesis the legacy of John Wesley and his beliefs put into practice in both England and the United States. In this next section, I will highlight how his upbringing, education, and experiences in ministry laid the groundwork for Methodism's anti-slavery work right from the beginning of the movement.

I also want to add that if you are not a United Methodist, I believe this piece will still be helpful as most protestant denominations experienced a similar history over the last several hundred years. Perhaps you can learn of our struggle and then research your denomination's past involvement. Maybe after reading this, you will be inspired to help get your denomination or church more involved in the fight against human trafficking. This is not a new conversation for Christians, but maybe for someone reading this, it will be. This work is only done by small actions of like-minded people fighting for a better and safer world for all.

From Methodism's earliest roots, John Wesley has been involved in the abolitionist movement. As a follower of Jesus Christ, he could not comprehend nor approve of one human having complete power and dominion over another. This seemed antithetical to the gospel. Yet throughout history, in Holy Scripture, in the 18th century during his life, and in the modern day slavery has existed and continues to exist. In this section I will share who John Wesley was, what role the Methodist movement had in the early abolitionist movement in the United States and abroad, and then explore Wesley's

theological underpinnings for his convictions. A reflection will also be offered from pastors who were in favor of slavery and a discussion regarding whether some of those once explicit statements are still prevalent in thought today. Once there is a foundational understanding of from the Methodist perspective from the past, I will offer a current analysis of how Methodist beliefs inform our response to human trafficking in our world today.

3.4.1 Who Was John Wesley?

On June 17, 1703, in a town called Epworth, a young boy named John Wesley was born. He was the son of a minister named Samuel and a mother named Susanna. John was the fifteenth child and second surviving son of the couple. His mother, Susanna, is traditionally given much of the credit for raising and teaching her children. His father Samuel's support for the monarchy, "especially the government program to drain the swamps around Epworth, put him at odds with much of the local populace, which resulted in the rectory being burned twice during his tenure there."[145] "One of these times, in 1709, was the occasion on which John Wesley was saved by the neighbors forming a human ladder to pluck him out of his second-floor bedroom window, which later gave rise to the frequent use of the phrase, 'plucked as a brand out of the fire.' This phrase became associated with both the saving of Wesley from this fire and, during the Methodist revival, of the people from the fires of hell."[146] From the start of his life to the end, Wesley had a fiery passion for God and for justice.

[145] Heitzenrater , Richard P. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists: Second Edition*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press; 2nd ed. Edition. 27.
[146] Ibid., 29.

John Wesley grew up learning about doctrine, faith, and what it meant to follow Jesus Christ. In 1713, Wesley moved to London to attend Charterhouse School. After this, he continued his education at Christ Church College at Oxford where he received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1726. It was at Oxford that his spiritual journey began to blossom and matter to him in a real and tangible way. "It was in 1725 when finished reading Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and Thomas á Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* that he resolved to dedicate his life to God. The next thirteen years were an agonizing attempt to work out the implication of that resolution"[147] This journey began when John and his younger brother, Charles, decided they wanted to meet together regularly with a handful of others who wanted to strive for holiness in their everyday lives. They wanted to read Scripture together, pray together, ask one another the important questions, and do the work of Christ in their community. They were so methodical in their practices their small club was named the Methodists. Others, in a sarcastic manner, referred to them as the holy club. It was this group that spurred Wesley on to his next large leap of faith after his ordination in the Church of England.

In October 1735, John and his brother Charles were aboard the *Simmonds* in the Atlantic Ocean on their way to Savannah, Georgia, where they had agreed to serve as missionaries.[148] Wesley said before he left, "My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to heathens."[149] Wesley served in America as a

[147] Harper, Steve. *John Wesley's Message for Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1983. 16-17.
[148] Pollock, John. *John Wesley*. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1995. 70.
[149] Ibid.

missionary for a few years but departed back to England on Christmas Eve of 1737. He was unsure of his future in ministry, what his purpose was, and wondering what would be next for him.

It did not take long for him to experience the power of the Holy Spirit working again in his life. He famously wrote in his personal journal,

> On May 24, 1738, Wesley reluctantly attended a group meeting that evening on Aldersgate Street in London. As he heard a reading from Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans, he felt his 'heart strangely warmed.' Wesley wrote in his journal that at about 8:45 p.m. 'while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.'[150]

From this moment on Wesley was a new man, and knew, for perhaps the first time, what he was called to do for the Kingdom. A revival was about to begin, and Wesley's preaching, teaching, and ministry would be the heart of it. Wesley recruited many others to join with him in the quest of spreading scriptural holiness and Christian teaching throughout England and beyond. He organized the new converts into societies for continued meeting and accountability, just as he had done at Oxford many years before. Throughout his life it is said he traveled over 250,000 miles, mostly on horseback, and preached over 44,000 times. Wesley breathed his last breath on this earth on March 2, 1791. His final words were, "Best of all, God is with us!"

This short biography of Wesley does not begin to explain the story and impact of his life, but it shows his birth, adolescence, and adult life in relationship to God, the church, and humanity. In the remainder of this section there will be many examples of his ministry, especially in regard to slavery across the Earth.

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[150] "What Is Aldersgate Day?" The United Methodist Church, August 6, 2019. https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-aldersgate-day.

3.4.2 What Were Wesley's Theological Reasons for Fighting Against Slavery?

In the preface of *John Wesley and Slavery*, Warren Thomas Smith, writes, "I now attempt to share about Wesley's attempts to abolish the demonic trade in human flesh."[151] For Wesley, each and every person was created in the image of God. Wesley often preached on the central theme of unity, justice, and equality for all persons. Wesley insisted that a person could not separate personal piety and social holiness. It is indeed about an individual and their relationship to Christ, but it is also about a person's neighbor here and there. Wesley is often quoted as saying, "The world is my parish!" Wesley meant it! It is seen in his preaching, teaching, and life's ministry.

To fully understand his views toward slavery, one must first understand Wesley's perspective on the human condition and the need for God's grace. Wesley wrote,

> Indeed, we are already bound hand and foot by the chains of our own sins. These...are chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are wounds wherewith the world, the flesh, and the devil, have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that bring us down to the chambers of the grave.[152]

Wesley was constantly struggling to clearly define and explain how and why sin is so prevalent in society. His brother, Charles Wesley helplessly claims, "Fast bound in sin, and misery / friend of sinners / let me find my help, my all in thee."[153] Although each person is created in the image of God, they are given liberty to make their own decisions. Unfortunately, some of these decisions lead to sin, evil, and death. Humanity is completely broken by sin, yet God came incarnate to save humanity from that sin.

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[151] Smith, Warren Thomas. *John Wesley and Slavery*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986. 11.
[152] Wesley, Sermon 26, "Sermon on the Mount VI" §III.13, Sermons (Outler), 233.
[153] *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742), 43–45, St. 1. John included as #105 in the 1780 *Collection of Hymns*

John and Charles Wesley both wrote about sin as being something that God foresaw, yet God allowed it to happen so humanity might grow into something better than Adam. John Wesley wrote, "Did not God foresee that Adam would abuse his liberty? ... He certainly did foresee the whole. This cannot be denied ... and it was undoubtedly in His power to prevent it ... but it was known to him at that same time that it was best upon the whole, not to prevent it."[154] Wesley believed that humanity had to learn from The Fall to be in a more intimate relationship with God and others. It is because of The Fall that humanity came to know God not just as a Creator, but also as Forgiver.

John Wesley wrote that if there was no fall then, "there could have been no such thing as faith in the Son of God, 'as loving and giving himself for us.' There could have been no faith in the Spirit of God, as renewing the image of God in our hearts."[155] By allowing The Fall to occur, God is revealed to humanity in deeper and stronger ways. God did not simply allow sin and evil in the world so we as humans might learn and become better, rather God enabled persons to have free will and make their own decisions. God despises sin and abhors the constant pain and suffering we endure because of the decisions made on Earth by people of power without regard for anyone except their own. It is for this reason Wesley felt compelled to use his office, influence, and power to speak out for freedom and justice for the slaves.

Smith comments towards the conclusion of *John Wesley and Slavery* that he "made it clear that the sins of the world would be judged. He made it equally explicit that

[154] John Wesley, Sermon 59, "God's Love to Fallen Man" §3, Sermons (Outler), 476-477.
[155] Ibid., §I.2, 478.

slaveholders, slave merchants, those who invested in slave property and others of the same ilk were all stained with the blood of those slaves and covered with guilt for their heinous crime."[156] Wesley's theology became real when he began to meet, interact, and share about God with slaves – particularly when he was a missionary to Savannah, Georgia. This was when his eyes were truly opened, and his ministry shifted. This specifically happened when he had meaningful conversations with slaves who had never heard of the love that God had for them.

3.4.3 What Are Realities of Slavery in Wesley's Lifetime?

In *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, Wesley opens the work by commenting, "By slavery I mean domestic slavery, or that of a servant to a master."[157] The type of slavery Wesley experienced and fought against still exists around the world, but slavery has also changed in many ways. Wesley continues by saying,

> Slavery imports an obligation of perpetual service, an obligation which only the consent of the master can dissolve. Neither in some countries can the master himself dissolve it without the consent of judges appointed by law. It generally gives the master an arbitrary power of any correction not affecting life or limb. Sometimes even these are exposed to his will: or protected only by a fine, or some slight punishment, too inconsiderable to restrain a master of a harsh temper. It creates an incapacity of acquiring anything, except for the master's benefit. It allows the master to alienate the slave, in the same manner as his cows and horses. Lastly, it descends in its full extent from parent to child, even to the latest generation.[158]

What is perhaps most shocking about Wesley's experience is that slavery was widely practiced, accepted, and legal. Even persons of faith seemed to have no second thought about owning, beating, and controlling slaves as an ethical or moral issue. This again highlights the difficult and uphill battle he and many others were fighting.

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[156] Smith, Warren Thomas. *John Wesley and Slavery*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986. 104.
[157] Wesley, John. *Thoughts upon Slavery: The Third Edition*. London: Printed by R. Hawes, 1774. 1.
[158] Ibid.

After an explanation of the many different types of African persons in the early section of the work, Wesley offers several explanations of how slaves are captured and transported. He writes, "The Christians landing upon their coasts, seized as many as they found, men, women, and children, and transported them to America. It was about 1551, that the English began trading to Guinea: At first, for gold and elephant's teeth, but soon after, for men. In 1566, Sir John Hawkins sailed with two ships to Cape Verde, where he sent eighty men on shore to catch negroes."[159] Wesley continues to offer story after story about how persons are taken from their homes and brought to a totally new world. Wesley then comments about the brutal nature of their treatment in the journey to wherever they were being taken.

The journey from Africa, on the ship across the Atlantic, known as the 'middle passage', to the market where they would be sold, to their new home is detailed in *John Wesley and Slavery* in the following way. Horrors of the middle passage became clear … when the surgeon's journal recounted how the captain was advised to cut off arms and legs of some slaves to terrify the rest into submission. Another story recounts a fire breaking out on board and some two hundred and fifty slaves were chained together and jumped overboard. Fifty died on land and the other two hundred were soon disposed of. Perhaps the most graphic of stories comes from John Barbot, of the French Company who said, "their masters strip them of all they have on their backs, so that they come on board start naked, as well women and men. In which condition they are obliged to

[159] Ibid., Section 3.

continue … six or seven hundred are sometimes abord the vessel where they lie close together."[160]

Life was no easier once they were purchased and started whatever work their master had planned for them. By 1807, Liverpool shipping companies had 185 slave ships capable of transporting a total of 40,000 human victims. The familiar design of the hold of these vessels, with human cargo placed layer upon layer, prompted William Wilberforce's remark, "Never can so much misery be found condensed into so small a space as in a slave ship."[161] Between the 15th and 19th centuries, a 400-year period, it is estimated that a total of some 15 million Africans were coerced and transported against their will to the Americas.

3.4.4 Was Wesley Really One of the First to Speak Against Slavery?

John Wesley was one of the first major Christian leaders to speak out against the slave trade in any or all of its many forms. Wesley was gifted in relating with the everyday people of the working force but also comfortable in the largest of churches. Everywhere he went he was preaching or teaching. His connections along his journey allowed him to truly be on the frontlines of Christian leaders speaking out in the 18th century. After many years of writing articles, sermons, and letters, The Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed on May 22, 1787. "It was a significant day, and thanks to the dedicated work of the Quakers and the leadership of public figures it

[160] All of this information was found in Smith, Warren Thomas. *John Wesley and Slavery*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986. 105-110.
[161] Metaxas, Eric. *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*. Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2013.

became an outstanding corpus of humanitarians engaged in a righteous cause."[162] Indeed it was! Now abolitionists were joined together and the work on speaking out against slavery unified.

Wesley then provides two concrete and down to earth suggestions for their committee moving forward in a letter that is worth sharing it its entirety to underscore how involved Wesley was in this work from the beginning. He wrote:

> He desired to forewarn them that they must expect difficulties in great opposition from those who were interested in the system, that they were a powerful body, and that they would raise all of their forces when they perceived their craft to be in danger. They would employ hireling writers, who would have neither justice nor mercy. But the Committee were not to be dismayed by such treatment, nor even if some of those professing goodwill toward them should turn against them. As to himself, he would do all he could to promote the object of their institution. He would re-print a new large edition of his *Thoughts Upon Slavery* and circulate it among his friends in England and Ireland, to whom he would add a few words in favor of their design.[163]

He concluded in these words by saying, "I commend you to him who is able to carry you through all opposition and support you under all discouragements."[164]

Wesley's writings and teachings also made impressions on fellow Methodists in America. The earliest example comes from a conference meeting in Baltimore on April 24, 1780, under the leadership of Francis Asbury, who records that question 16 was asked, "Ought not this conference to require those travelling Preachers who hold slaves, to give promises, to set them free?" The answer in the minutes was yes. Question 17 asked, "Does this conference acknowledge that slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society, contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would no other should do to us and ours? Do we pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves and advise their freedom?" The

[162] Ibid., 106.
[163] Ibid, 108.
[164] Ibid.

answer again, was yes. The debate on slavery in America continued for several years and more questions and discussions were had as to what needed to be done with preachers who refused to free the slaves they owned.[165]

There was a special conference held from December 24, 1784, to January 2, 1785, at Lovely Lane Meeting House in Baltimore where the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was born. The slavery issue was clearly reflected in the 1785 *Discipline*. The opening statement reads as such:

> We are deeply conscious of the impropriety of making new terms of communion for a religious society already established, expecting on the most pressing occasion: and search we esteem the practice of holding our fellow creatures in slavery. Review it as contrary to the golden law of God on which hang all the law and the prophets, and the unalienable rights of mankind, as well as every principle of the revolution, to hold in deepest debasement, in a more abject slavery then is perhaps to be found in any part of the world except America, so many souls that are capable of the image of God. We therefore think it is our most bounden duty, to take immediately some effectual method to extirpate this abomination from among us.[166]

This portion of the conference's work concluded with the question, "What shall be done with those who buy or sell slaves, or give them away? The answer, clear cut: they are immediately to be expelled: unless they buy them on purpose to set them free."[167]
In the early Methodist church, if you were a preacher and owned slaves, you were expelled. It is admirable that the people known as Methodist across the globe have been working on this plague on society for over 200 years, and yet there is still so much more work to be done. Perhaps the most poignant way to be reminded of Wesley's passion for ending slavery is that the final letter he wrote in his life was to William Wilberforce on February 24, 1791. Wilberforce was a slave trader subsequently turned abolitionist.[168] In

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[165] Ibid, 113.
[166] Ibid, 114.
[167] Ibid.
[168] An additional resource to learn more about Wilberforce is entitled, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's Circle Transformed Brittan.*

his letter, Wesley wrote, “Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.” Wesley died just a few days later at 10:00 a.m. on March 2, 1791. Wesley’s legacy is forever imprinted in the fight against slavery not only in America and England, but around the world.

3.4.5 United Methodism and Slavery Today

The previous pages have articulated who John Wesley was, explored his theology around slavery, and examined the realities of his day. The question becomes – how can we learn from the past as we move into the future?

John Wesley believed in the worth of every human being as a God-designed and valuable person. The act of slavery and treatment of those in bondage to another is an abuse of power with extremely harmful effects on a person. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade did not end because slavery was not popular or no longer useful. Instead, slavery in the 19th century ended due to the perseverance and commitment of people of faith coming together to change the world for a hopeful tomorrow. The eradication of slavery took decades and even divided a nation. As we learn more each year about the unthinkable nature of modern-day slavery, called human trafficking, it is clear that there is a great deal of work left to do.

Modern day trafficking of persons is a complex web of crimes. Each country has different policies and laws regarding trafficking. Though not every country identifies trafficking as a crime, the United Nations has worked to create guidelines and sanctions

concerning treatment of people.[169] Attorneys and judges have systems and laws in place for prosecuting the perpetrators and protecting the victims. Mental and medical health services have research and funding available to support the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors. Educators are now teaching about the signs and nature of trafficking in schools. There is movement, yet there are 40-50 million victims worldwide.[170]

The church has an opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus in speaking out against this crime. John Wesley made it the business of the early Methodists to be vocal in proclaiming the inherent worth and dignity of persons. If Wesley were alive today, he would charge followers to protect human rights for those in our communities and our world. This charge is to speak to the masses during Sunday morning church services, at community meetings, or speaking to followers on social media. The Christian witness is a powerful tool for leading individuals to salvation as well as liberating those who are being held in modern slavery.

John Wesley had three general rules for the people called Methodist. First, to do good. Second, to do no harm. Third, to stay in love with God.[171] It is time for Methodists and Christians around the world to embrace these rules and join in the fight against human trafficking. If we love God, do good, and avoid harm then modern slavery will no longer exist. Eradicating slavery, one of humanity's most wicked problems, from the

[169] "Trafficking in Persons - United Nations and the Rule of Law." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed July 13, 2022. https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/transnational-threats/trafficking-in-persons/.
[170] "2021 Trafficking in Persons Report - United States Department of State." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State, September 14, 2021. https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/.
[171] For a much more detailed explanation of the general rules see: Thompson, Andrew C. "The Practical Theology of the General Rules." The Asbury Journal, 2013.

planet once and for all is a gigantic task. This section has connected the Holiness Code from Leviticus and the Wesleyan understanding of holiness to be one in of the same. The call is to love God and to love neighbor. This is echoed by Jesus time and time again throughout the gospels. Unfortunately, as we have learned, the loving the neighbor part of our call has been compromised and perverted because of the crime and sin of human trafficking. The complexity of human trafficking makes the work seem impossible. The Church will be instrumental in helping change the world we live in if persons come together and fight for what is right. Even if the mountains seem too high - the good news is that God has moved mountains before, and God can do it again.

4. Hear From the Experts

In the following pages, you will hear from four women who are leading the fight against human trafficking in the state of Florida and beyond. They all represent agencies I have had the honor of partnering with over the last several years.

4.1 Introductions and Missions

Tess Lewis serves as the Violence Intervention and Justice Specialist for Abuse Counseling and Treatment (ACT) located in Fort Myers, Florida. ACT provides services for both domestic violence and sexual assault survivors and is certified at the state level by the Department of Children and Families and the Florida Coalition Against Sexual Violence serving Lee, Hendry, and Glades counties. Tess shared the following:

> I like to think of our goal here at the agency as being twofold. We have our short-term, more immediate day to day goal, which is to reach and empower victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking by providing them with all of the safety, support, resources, and services that they need in order to live a safe and fulfilling life free of fear, and free of violence. Then we have our broader, more long-term goal as an agency which is, ultimately, to create a community free of violence, and to putting an end to gender-based violence in Lee County and our greater community. We envision of a community where every individual is safe, respected, and valued. A vision

> where our community and society as a whole does not tolerate or accept violence of any kind, at any level.[172]

Laurie Swink is the Co-Founder of Selah Freedom based in Sarasota, Florida. Selah Freedom serves trafficking survivors locally and nationally. As Director of Selah Consulting, Laurie trains and mentors anti-trafficking organizations locally, nationally, and globally. Laurie stated that "the goal of Selah Freedom is to eradicate sex trafficking and bring freedom to the exploited through five programs: Awareness, Prevention, Outreach, Residential, and Consulting."[173]

Ana Stevenson is the founder and president of Path2Freedom. Fawn Volkert is the Program Director for Path2Freedom. Path2Freedom serves minor females who have experienced sexual exploitation across the state of Florida, and they work primarily in Lee and Collier county. The goal of Path2Freedom is to provide safe housing and programs for girls that have been sexually exploited. They are licensed through the Florida Department of Children and Families to work with girls ages 12-17 who have been sexually exploited for something of value, which by law, is considered human trafficking.[174]

These are their stories, their experiences, and a vision of hope they have for the future.

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[172] All quotes from Tess Lewis were gathered from an in-person interview at the ACT Shelter in Fort Myers, Florida on 6/22/23. The audio recording and audio transcript are both available on Duke Zoom and Duke Box for future reference. All quotes are used with permission. This section of the thesis has also been approved by Tess Lewis for accuracy.

[173] All quotes from Laurie Swink were gathered from a Zoom interview on 6/16/23. The audio recording and audio transcript are both available on Duke Zoom and Duke Box for future reference. All quotes are used with permission. This section of the thesis has also been approved by Laurie Swink for accuracy.

[174] All quotes from Ana Stevenson and Fawn Volkert were gathered from an in-person interview at the Path2Freedom Magnolia House in Fort Myers, Florida on 6/22/23. The audio recording and audio transcript are both available on Duke Zoom and Duke Box for future reference. All quotes are used with permission. This section of the thesis has also been approved by Ana Stevenson and Fawn Volkert for accuracy.

4.2 What is the primary way of achieving your organization's goals?

Tess Lewis shared that "education and awareness play such a major role in everything that ACT does, from primary prevention to intervention services and securing funding for our program, so a lot of effort and care goes into building relationships in the community and helping people know they exist and are ready to help." The team at ACT works both day and night to get information out into the community about gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and the services they provide. She continued by saying,

> We cannot accomplish our goal of reaching, supporting, and serving victims and survivors and their families if we cannot identify them, or if they cannot identify us as a service provider to reach out for help from. The first step is always to raise awareness and to educate the community on these crimes, on how to respond effectively, and what they can do as community members to support victims and survivors. We also want to help combat these forms of violence, to spread the word about our services, and what all that we do.

While ACT has three residential centers, they are primarily short term and for victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault. Victims and survivors who reach out to ACT are met, first and foremost, with belief and unconditional support. Services are always optional and are only provided upon receipt of informed consent from the participant and are tailored to fit the individual needs of the participant. All of ACT's programs adhere to a trauma-informed, survivor-centered, empowerment-based framework and utilize evidence-based practices. Their residential programs are comprehensive but primarily short-term, with participants generally staying between 6 weeks to a year. They are best equipped to support victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault. Upon intake and assessment, in cases when they confirm that a person is being trafficked, they will continue to work with the individual and assist them to the extent possible but will often refer out to one of their partners for a more complete and long-term care option to address

specialized needs. They do all of this with a quick intake and response time for persons who reach out for help through their 24/7 Helpline. The best news? All of ACT's services are safe, confidential, and one hundred percent free.

Laurie Swink stated the way they accomplish the goal of Selah Freedom is to address the issue from every perspective through their five programs. The comprehensive approach is through Awareness, Prevention, Outreach, Residential, and Consulting. She shared the following:

> The first program is Awareness. We educate the community on what trafficking is and what to look for and how to become part of the solution. The second program is our Outreach-which works to build-relationships with people who are currently 'in the life' so we can provide services to them. We are also training law enforcement to understand what trafficking is, and to understand why these people are out there. Because to be fair to law enforcement, many of them had the same mentality that I did before I learned what this was all about. I grew up in the Bradenton and Sarasota area. It is my hometown. I used to see women walking out there on the streets and while driving by I would think, 'Why don't you just go get a job? I have a job, just go get a job. You don't have to do that!'
>
> When I found out how many of these men and women were being sold for sex, or sexually abused as children, my eyes were opened to what was really going on. Many of these survivors started experiencing abuse as young as 3, 4, and 5 years old. It is because of this trauma, they end up running away when they are 11, 12, or 13 years old. Some do this because they think anything out there has got to be better than what is happening here. The reality is these predators know they are out there, know that is probably their story, or some version of it - and that is when they move in to trap them.
>
> Our third program is our Residential program. The residential program is a holistic approach to restoration. Survivors, who have had everything stolen from them, get the stability and rest they need to dream again. While in our program, survivors are equipped with the wrap-around services and resources they need to be free. They can also accomplish goals they never knew were possible. This includes things like getting their GED, reconnecting with their children and family, getting a driver's license, and even learning to swim. 87% of survivor graduates of our Residential Program do not return to 'the life.'[175]

On Selah's website, the process of the residential program is described in detail. "First, survivors enter the Rest Phase, which allows them to reflect and decide if they are

[175] "The Life" is a phrase often used at Selah Freedom to describe the conditions the victims of trafficking endured in the past when they were actively being trafficking. It does not have a specific meaning, but encompasses the variety of experiences victims may have when they are being trafficked.

prepared to move forward with stepping into the new life Selah Freedom offers."[176] Laurie shared, "this is in the assessment house where they stay 4-6 weeks after they are detoxed or out of jail. She shared, "this is where we are most busy, and we need more homes/staff/etc., to meet the demand. In June of 2023, we have an estimated 2 month wait to get in."

"The second phase is the Restore Phase. This is where women receive a personalized education plan, medical aid, trauma therapy, job placement, case management, and restorative services. They also have the opportunity to build healthy and safe relationships that will follow them into their final stage of the program. This is the long-term residential facility that lasts for 12-18 months."[177]

"The final stage is the Relaunch Phase, in which survivors receive individualized planning and assistance with living independently, career goals, and continued support. Selah Freedom is there with them every step of the way through their transformation."[178] Laurie shared that, "Selah also has an independent living program where, depending on their income, they pay 30% of their paycheck to stay there as they get back up on their feet, once they have graduated from the program." Selah Freedom is not a crisis center or emergency shelter, but it is a long-term solution for persons eighteen years of age or older who are survivors of sex trafficking and/or exploitation. If a survivor is ready to start a new life outside of what they have known, Selah Freedom is the perfect place to start.

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[176] "Residential." n.d. *Selah Freedom* (blog). Accessed June 25, 2023. https://selahfreedom.com/residential/.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.

Only women are eligible for the residential care, but all of the other services are available for men as well through the Outreach programs.

Laurie continued by sharing:

> Our fourth program is our Prevention program. This is when we are really wanting to get on the front end of this whole thing and educate children and caregivers to empower them to stand up against these predators when they show up online, in person, and in the neighborhoods. We have written age-appropriate curriculum for children ages kindergarten to twelfth grade. We go into schools, churches, or anywhere we are invited – and we teach to these kids and their families as much as we can in the time, we have with them. Believe it or not, it is actually fun and very interactive. The kids really do love it.

Laurie also said,

> We are not going in and teaching about sex. One of the things we teach is the difference between a secret and a surprise. We do this because too many times these pedophiles tell them they have to keep the secret. And if they do not keep the secret, something bad will happen to them, so they better keep the secret. The predators know this feels awful to the child. They make the victims feel shame, guilt, confused, and isolated. From this experience they feel betrayal, but they do not know who they can go talk to about what they are feeling. That is why we teach the difference between a secret and a surprise. We talk to them about having three trusted adults they can go to and share the secret, and they are not family members. Why is that? Because oftentimes the abuse can come from inside the family.

She continued by sharing,

> Our fifth program is Consulting. Selah opened in 2011, in 2012 we became a 501(C)(3), and in 2013 we opened our first residential program. Something I have seen since starting this work is several other individuals or groups have a lot of excitement and momentum, they buy a house for a residential program, or they raise money to help the cause - but a year later they close their doors. They started for the right reasons. They started because they saw a problem and they wanted to become part of the solution. This is wonderful and good, but most people do not think about, or cannot begin to imagine how many people, how much time, and how complex an organization like this really is.
>
> Why? Because every single case is different. The needs of every person we meet are different. Once you launch a residential program, it is 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You have to have trained staff and volunteers. There are a lot of a policies, procedures, and manuals of how things have to be done - and if you do not do all of these things correctly, you can end up re-victimizing the victims and then victimizing your volunteers and your staff as well. Unfortunately, I have seen that happen after organizations have opened too soon or without enough training. I also want to mention how important the programming you have is for the survivors. Truthfully, having a house is only 10% of the solution, the other 90% is the program you have to help these people recover and the people that you surround them with.

Selah's program is one that is long-term and with a high success rate, 87% of the Selah graduates do not return to the life. It is a program that multiple organizations around the country are working to replicate as they serve their communities.

Ana Stevenson and Fawn Volkert shared that the name of Path2Freedom's safe house is called the Magnolia House. The home was originally an orphanage, but as the founders were getting older, they knew it was time to sell. When Ana walked in the home for the first time, she "felt the presence of God and knew this is where they needed to be." The home has six rooms and is quite large. This means they can have five girls in the house at a time with the house parents. They also have a pool, barn out back with three horses, and a school room connected to the barn. They are planning to build another transitional home on the campus in the coming years to help girls ages 18+ who have transitioned out of state mandated care. They explained to me that,

> The Magnolia Program is a family-first model of care that engages, equips, and empowers residents to claim total freedom over the effects of trauma while meeting the needs of the whole child in a trauma-informed environment. The Magnolia Team equips residents to explore areas of interest in the safety of the Magnolia home and supportive programs. Residents are provided tools with which to support this exploration. The Magnolia Team empowers residents to accomplish their goals inside and outside of the Magnolia home and supportive program structure. The Magnolia Program empowers individuals to leave home with ongoing family-style support indicative of healthy family experiences. This includes a fund that offers financial support for long-term housing and other essentials.[179]

Ana and Fawn both emphasized the importance of the family-first model and helping these girls, "break the generational curses of their families." They want the Magnolia House to be a safe, comfortable, and peaceful location for their healing process to begin. They do not want it to feel like a rehab facility or hospital experience, but one where the girls could some to start a new life.

[179] "Programs | Path 2 Freedom | Hope and Healing for Child Victims of Human Trafficking." n.d. Accessed June 26, 2023. https://www.path2freedom.org/programs/.

Path2Freedom's website explains in detail how they accomplish their goals. This happens through what they called their Six Pillars of Restoration.

> The first pillar is family first. Being family is an organization-wide priority to exist as a community of support for our Safe Home residents. Safe Homes are staffed with full time parenting adults as opposed to shift workers. Parenting adults express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities for those we serve. The Magnolia Model values grandparent interactions and incorporates grandparenting into volunteer opportunities.
>
> The second pillar is individualized. The Magnolia Model provides individualized services based on the unique needs of each child. This individualized approach is modeled throughout all areas of programming. Parenting adults strive to meet the unique familial needs of each child. Every child is assigned a personalized treatment and intervention team meeting their unique therapeutic needs.
>
> The third pillar is strengths focused. The Magnolia Model recognizes that each child is designed with a unique set of gifts and talents known as strengths. The team actively listens to learn about each child's unique set of strengths, interests, and desires. The team engages in conversations about those strengths in an encouraging way that allows the child to share more autonomously and openly. The organization invests in and fosters the exploration and development of strengths, desires, and interests. The Safe Home Team celebrates with residents as milestones are achieved.
>
> The fourth pillar is evidence-based. The Magnolia Model recognizes that each child is designed with a unique set of gifts and talents known as strengths. The team actively listens to learn about each child's unique set of strengths, interests, and desires. The team engages in conversations about those strengths in an encouraging way that allows the child to share more autonomously and openly. The organization invests in and fosters the exploration and development of strengths, desires, and interests. The Safe Home Team celebrates with residents as milestones are achieved.
>
> The fifth pillar is licensed mental health oversight. The Magnolia Model aims to become the best practice model for long-term care nationwide. Therefore, the safe house and supportive programs are monitored and assessed by a professional Licensed Mental Health professional. This LMH professional provides supervision to staff, evaluates outcomes, and works to ensure the efficacy of the Magnolia Model of Care.
>
> The sixth and final pillar is collaboration. The Magnolia Model was launched to respond to gaps in services and therefore does not duplicate services. Instead, the model relies on and values collaborating with existing service providers. Collaboration extends the child's supportive community beyond the property of the safe home. Extending the supportive community beyond the Magnolia Program fosters longevity of support so that when girls graduate from the Magnolia Program, the extended supportive community remains. The Magnolia Program is enhanced by leveraging other existing valuable services. Services such as equine experiences, cooking, fitness, and art classes are offered by partnering organizations, churches, businesses, and individuals.[180]

[180] "Six Pillars | Path 2 Freedom | Hope and Healing for Child Victims of Human Trafficking." n.d. Accessed June 27, 2023. https://www.path2freedom.org/program-model/.

The Path2Freedom strategy for serving minor female victims of human trafficking has proven to be holistic and successful in their first several years of serving the state and community.

4.3 What do you wish people knew about trafficking?

Tess Lewis said, "it impacts everyone." In her experience, "most people assume that this is something far away, something that does not happen here, something that 'I do not need to care about or worry about, because it does not affect me.' I do not mean that people are selfish or lacking in compassion for victims, far from it – people do care about this issue, and they want to help, but I think that they do not always understand just how relevant this issue is to them, or they may not realize that they have the power to do something about it."

She continued by saying, "I would like for people to understand that their lives and they themselves are being impacted by human trafficking, even if they have not been directly affected by it or known somebody who has been affected and therefore, that they, too, have a stake in combatting it" She explained this further by highlighting two of the ways in which our society feels the impacts of this crime. "The first is as a public health issue and the second is as a financial issue. With any public health issue, the impacts are diverse and widespread, there is often a high cost associated with it, and that is no different with a survivor or victim of human trafficking." She explained this further by saying,

> For most survivors, their experiences of trafficking and exploitation are one of many abuses and injustices that they have endured in their lifetime. Most of the survivors we see have histories of other forms of abuse and maltreatment, often dating back to their childhood, before they were trafficked. Due to the severe and complex nature of this polyvictimization, we often see particularly high rates of chronic illness and mental

> health disorders like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder in trafficked individuals.

Tess then explained it this way:

> there is a massive, massive amount of people who have been victimized, who are then going to go on to experience detrimental and often long-term physical health consequences and mental health consequences, on top of struggling with the impacts of previous or adjacent adverse experiences including substance use or addiction, and things like food or housing insecurity that, without proper intervention, will impact their relationships, their quality and even length of life – and many of these survivors also have children, so that is another generation of lives that are being dramatically altered by experiences of direct or secondary human trafficking victimization. That is costing the community and it is exhausting our health care system and our health care providers. That is taking resources, time, energy, and money from an array of industries and social services that could otherwise be spent elsewhere.

She was not saying these are not important and worthy things to do, instead, she was highlighting how if a person had not been trafficked in the first place – these resources could have been used to do other good work.

She also added a word about the cost of victimization in terms of lost wages and productivity. She explained that:

> when somebody is trafficked and is being exploited, they are not able to be a functioning, healthy member of society. They are often not able to enter the workforce in the traditional sense, pursue education, or explore their interests. They are not able to participate in our economy in the same ways as someone who has not been trafficked. I feel compelled to frame it this way in hopes of appealing to individuals and businesses that traditionally have not viewed themselves as stakeholders in the fight against human trafficking, to help them recognize that their communities, their businesses, their livelihoods are being negatively affected by this issue. On a more human level, these are people with unique strengths, talents, interests – each one of them possessing the potential to impact our world in magnificent ways. When we allow human trafficking to take someone's life – whether literally or figuratively through loss of hope, freedom, and opportunity – that person's dreams, all the potential that they had, those things die with them, and we miss out on all that they have to offer the world. When you think of it like that, you start to realize that human trafficking is costing us in ways we can't even conceive of.

In summary, Tess said, "preventing human trafficking and putting an end to this is going to directly benefit everyone in so many ways. By doing this work we are strengthening your community, and we are strengthening the society that you and I are a part of. It is safer for you, for your children, for your friends, and for your loved ones."

The second idea Tess wanted everyone to know about trafficking is that "every single person has the ability and power to affect change and to combat human trafficking." As for how to help she offered:

> at the risk of sounding like a broken record, I feel compelled to say that education is the first line of defense. Abuse thrives in silence – when we choose not to think about or talk about these things because they make us uncomfortable, because we find them shameful or unpleasant or inappropriate or irrelevant, we are inadvertently adding to the problem in two ways: by depriving ourselves and our youth of the knowledge and tools that will help keep our communities safe from this violence, and by further reinforcing the stigma that surrounds abuse. Though it is not our intention, we are creating an environment where victims feel unsafe to speak out, teaching our children that it is not okay for them to talk about these things – even if they see it happening to someone near them or, God forbid, experience it themselves. Traffickers know this – in fact, they count on it, because our silence breeds victims. In light of this, one of the most powerful things that we can do as a society to combat human trafficking is to be willing to learn and talk about this – and I do not mean talk about what we think it is but talk about what it *really* is. Bring it out of the shadows, empower survivors to come forward and empower people in our communities – especially our children – to say something when they see something.

She said we can also accomplish this simply by "practicing kindness and practicing empathy, and ultimately just taking an interest in the well-being of the people around us."

Laurie Swink shared that "this is something that could happen to anybody's child or anybody's grandchild. It can happen to anyone of any socioeconomic status, at any place, and at any time." She said, "it is especially prevalent online and the number of predators in chat rooms and across social media is truly horrifying. We really have to look at it as this could be my child, or this could be my grandchild, and I need to be part of a solution."

Ana Stevenson said, "it could be happening next door." Fawn Volkert wants people to know "how complex the trauma is that these girls experience and that it takes a lifetime of support to find and experience healing." She wants people to know that "this work is not just coddling victims, it is about empowering them to live out the passions,

dreams, and hopes while experiencing healing on this side of eternity - and that is what we help them do here, one day at a time."

4.4 What sustains you in doing this work?

Tess Lewis said it is essential to, "celebrate the small successes." She explained this by saying, "in this field, we are all striving towards that big picture goal of creating a safer world free of violence, but if you are constantly focused on that big broad goal, you are going to lose sight of the smaller short-term objectives. If you only focus on the big picture, despite the good work you do, you are never going to really feel like you are actually making progress." She explained this more when she said, "we really have to break it down into smaller pieces and celebrate those small successes and those moments where we made a difference, or where we accomplished a short-term goal, and where we are feeling good about the work that we are doing." Tess also mentioned creating a self-care routine that works for you is essential. She explained that what works for one person might not work for another, but if you hope to be in this for the long haul - taking breaks, doing things away from work, and creating space for you is mandatory. She wanted to remind those involved in this work, "that what we do is not a 9-5, and then you get to go home and not think about it anymore. It can be all consuming if you let it. Creating that space is easier said than done, but it is necessary."

Laurie Swink shared that you must know ***why*** you are starting a nonprofit. She said, "if it's a call from God, then you need to do it. If it is not a calling from God, then do not start a nonprofit. You should go help some place or somewhere else instead. There are so many battles and there are so many difficult times - but if you can fall back on and

remember, 'Well, God, I know you told me to do this, so help me out,' you know you can keep moving forward."

Laurie also emphasized, "do not let the calling become 24/7 for you. You have to recognize that yes, this is a calling that God has given you, but God has also called you to other things too. You are called to your faith, your family, your friends, and to having fun. She said, "these other components are vitally important to your life and bring balance to your life." Laurie also mentioned the importance of "remembering and celebrating your successes."

Ana Stevenson shared that despite how overwhelming the work may feel at times, or how big the mountains in front of them may look, "we always commit to being in prayer and asking for God's help and guidance. We truly commit to the spiritual disciplines and spending time with God as individuals and as a staff." They both shared that "having people to lean on and help carry the load is so important in this work." They also said, "we have to constantly remind ourselves that at the end of the day, we are not the ones in control. God is in control and God has called us to serve, help, and show up every day for these girls that have been entrusted to us in this season of their lives. We want to see them reach their goals and pursue what they are passionate about."

In summary, persons involved in anti-trafficking work need to develop boundaries, stay connected to God, find a support system outside of the people they work with, and remember that it is God who has called them to this work, and it is God who will see them through.

4.5 What are ways individuals and churches can get involved in the fight?

Tess Lewis offered a compelling answer to this question. She responded by saying, “in the most direct way, there are ways for churches to get involved at every single level. A church could become a service provider, members could receive training to become a Victim Advocate, and even go as far as opening a new shelter.” Tess commented that a huge need is shelter space, especially for men and boys across Florida. She shared that at this time there is only one shelter dedicated to serving male victims across the whole state. Tess also said, “churches and individuals can partner with anti-human trafficking organizations to create community events for awareness and outreach.” The two additional ways she recommended for churches and individuals to help are through peer mentoring and financial donations to support the work of existing agencies already in the field doing this work.

Tess also made a comment that was a helpful reminder for the church to simply keep being the church. She said, “so many human trafficking victims credit churches and credit faith-based organizations with their escape from their situation, with their healing, even with their survival in many cases. In my experience, from what I have seen, so many survivors now belong to faith-based communities that are helping them to rebuild and reshape their lives.”

Laurie Swink mentioned the importance of connecting and building relationships with local law enforcement. She said, “It is not about showing up and telling them they are doing it wrong or not doing enough. Instead, it is about offering to help with training and support.” She also mentioned putting the donation boxes around the church campus to collect items for needs that they have. She said, “I mean, we have a residential home,

so you can imagine all the toilet paper we need! We just always have needs because our program is completely free to the survivors."

She also mentioned how mainstream media has normalized addictions to strip clubs, porn, and buying sex in movies, tv, and our culture. She sees this as propaganda, and as something that is not normal. Laurie hopes that "churches can be a place where people can come, talk about their struggles, and share their secrets about addictions to sex or pornography." She hopes that the "church could be a place where people who have been sexually abused can come to begin to heal, receive support, and not repeat the cycle." Laurie mentioned several times the importance of collaboration and working together. She said, "In our Consulting approach, we initially determine what services are currently being offered, link arms, then help fill the gap of what may still be needed."

Ana Stevenson and Fawn Volkert shared one of the best ways that churches can help is by "opening their spaces for trainings, outreach events, and for support groups – not only for victims of human trafficking, but all kinds of community needs." Both complimented several churches in their area that come with servant's hearts. They shared a story about how churches in their community collected several cars full of items for the Magnolia House, delivered them, and left. They did not want to pry into the resident's lives, they did not ask, 'well now what are you going to do for us?' They simply were the hands and feet of Christ making a major difference in these girl's lives."

In summary, for churches, the possibilities are numerous. Churches could become service providers, or even strive to open a home for survivors. Churches can open their doors for community groups to use their spaces. Churches can make financial donations to existing programs. Churches can collect everyday items for the survivors as well as

things the organization needs to function. Individuals can become mentors or victim's advocates. Churches can also be a safe place for people to come and receive the counseling, support, and encouragement they need to begin their own journeys of healing from sexual abuse, trauma, or a current addiction. Lastly, the church can simple be the church by offering the love of Jesus every week. After all that these victims have been through, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross, who gave his life for theirs, might just be the best news they ever hear.

4.6 What resources do you have to offer local churches and individuals?

Tess Lewis shared the best way that they can resource churches and individuals is by tailoring training for them. She said, "we can make it meet your needs whether we have fifteen minutes or two hours with you." She encourages churches to attend trainings that teach them to know what to look for, and if you see it, what to do about it." ACT also has a wide variety of hard copy literate and digital content to help spread and raise awareness online and in person. These are available by request and on their website. Tess mentioned that their social media outreach has been an important part of their work over the last several years.

Laurie Swink mentioned they have both Awareness and Prevention trainings they host, "so people can see opportunities even beyond what the church can provide." They also have aged based curriculum for children ages 5-18 that is adaptable and flexible. In addition, training for caregivers, parents, teachers, church staff that empowers them to have a healthy discussion with their child that does not instill fear but provides empowerment for the adult as well as the child. Selah Freedom offers a wide variety of

digital and printed materials on their website, and you may request a speaker to come and present to your congregation or via online.

Ana and Fawn both shared that their website is filled with a variety of digital resources, and they have some printed literature they take when doing community outreach, but they also refer others to organizations that also do this work for more in depth materials should a person or church desire it. They are deeply focused on the work at the Magnolia House and seeing the transformation of those in their care.

4.7 Why are you called to this work?

Tess Lewis shared that she gives credit to her family for the work she is doing now. She grew up in a justice-minded family with her father being a public defender and her mother heavily involved in community service and education. She shared, "around our dinner table, no topic was off limits, especially the difficult ones." She shared from a young age she was interested in learning more about violent crime and injustice. It is because of her interests in learning more she has always been passionate about making the world a better place in some way. Yet, for many years, she did not know what her calling meant or how to do this important work as a career. She spent a few years as a teacher in South Korea, and upon returning joined the staff of ACT through the AmeriCorps VISTA Program for a year. Once that year was up, she was offered an opportunity to stay on at ACT to help with the development of a new program and joined the staff of ACT in her current role as the Violence Intervention and Justice Specialist in their community outreach department. She told me, "I really did not ever see myself doing this job, and yet, here I am."

Laurie Swink said she is called to this work because she's "unqualified!" A church she was worshipping at showed a video from the A21 Campaign and it was a story about a young lady in another country sharing what had happened to her. She said, "I had an experience that I have not had before, and one that I have not had since. But once the video was over, the next slide it showed was just a black screen with white words that said, 'Who will give them a home?' I literally felt a piercing in my heart, and it made me gasp. After the service I found myself saying, 'Well, somebody needs to do something about that." She then shared, "For the next two weeks, I would turn on the TV, pick up the newspaper, or magazine, and there was always something about trafficking. 'So, I was finally like, okay, God, I get it. You want *me* to do something about it.'" Laurie then shared,

> I then called the other co-founder. We were in a prayer ministry together and I said, 'Misty, I think we are supposed to open a house for sex trafficking survivors.' Shocked, she replied, 'where are we going to get them from?' I said, 'I do not know.' Misty then said, 'where are we going to get the house from?' I said, 'I do not know where we're getting a house from.' Misty then asked, 'what are we going to do with them once we get them?' Again, my answer, 'I don't know.'
>
> She agreed to do it, and at that time all we had were questions. What came next was months of reading books, going to conferences, hearing from others doing this work, and that is when the light bulb went off. I learned that it was happening right here, I had literally driven right by it my whole life and never knew what I was looking at.

When asked how she has managed to stay involved and have an effective ministry she said,

> It is because we've stayed focused. It is also because God has continually sent us amazing people. God has opened doors we did not even know existed. God has closed doors that were frustrating as well. Now in hindsight, I understand why, because God is in charge of the timing. Yes, it does get discouraging sometimes, that is for sure. But I always have to remember that I was called by God to do this. Even when things do not go the way we hoped, or if we do not always get it perfect, God still uses this work for good.

Fawn Volkert shared that she has spent her professional career working and serving with non-profits. She has also always had a passion for helping children who have experienced

sexual exploitation and trauma. She was hired at Path2Freedom to help with development, but over time her role has shifted and aligned more with her passion of being involved with helping girls who have experienced sexual trauma to find healing and restoration. She shared her life verse is Genesis 50:20 which says, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.” Fawn courageously uses her own story to help these girls and young women start a new life.

Ana Stevenson shared that back in the year 2000 her mother, who was a Department of Children and Families private investigator, investigated cases in which children were being sexually or physically assaulted. During this time her mother worked alongside woman named Anna Rodriguez who worked for the Sheriff's Department. One day, her mother asked her to consider serving as Guardian Ad Litem alongside Anna Rodriguez, as she thought they would get along together well and be a strong team for justice. At that time Ana Stevenson, and her husband John, had four young daughters so decided she could not do it. Years later, Ana was leading a Bible study, and an author in the study had started working with victims of human trafficking. Ana shared this was the first time she heard about it. Shortly after that gathering, a former pastor of hers left the church, moved to Tampa, and began helping victims of trafficking. Then, shortly after that, another person in the Bible study she was leading brought it up again and shared with Ana that trafficking was happening in Collier County, where they lived and were raising their children.

She then said to herself, “I have four daughters of my own – I need to get educated on this. I googled local organizations that are working with this population, and

as I scrolled down to the bottom, and I could not believe it, but the same woman who my Mom wanted me to work with back in 2000 was the woman running one of organizations. It was in that moment I knew it was a tap from God to get involved." She then shared that she heard a survivor share her story for the first time in person and she could only see the faces of her daughters. There was no turning back, she knew she needed to do something. That epiphany was the beginning of Path2Freedom.

4.8 Where have you seen the church at its best and perhaps its worst in this work?

Tess Lewis mentioned that churches are oftentimes excellent at inspiring the community to action and mobilizing their parishioners to get involved and to feel passionately about this work. Tess also shared that she has witnessed churches jump into immediate action. She said, "I think something that is especially powerful about churches is that they are able to act independently, and they are not constrained by strict policy or regulations like other organizations might be. This allows them to work quickly and efficiently to meet the needs of the community."

Tess also mentioned,

> people in the community do not enjoy talking about sexual assault. They do not enjoy talking or thinking about domestic violence and human trafficking, or knowing that it does, in fact, exist in their community. I think there are a lot of psychosocial and environmental barriers in the community that can make it difficult for people to learn about and access our services. That is always something that we have to work to overcome, and churches can help us do that in a meaningful way by helping to initiate those conversations, to spread the word about our services, and to create spaces where dialogue and learning can take place, and where victims and survivors can feel safe and empowered to come forth and ask for help.

A word of challenge Tess offered to churches surrounding this work is to "remember that the goal when helping these survivors is to restore power and control to them, and not take it away. Oftentimes people have really good intentions, and really

want to help, but without proper training their words and actions can do more harm than good when working with survivors." She also shared her hope that churches would "examine and speak candidly about social and cultural norms and the kinds of circumstances that contribute to violence in their communities as well as at the broader societal level. There are circumstances, norms, structures, and ideologies that generate and exacerbate vulnerability, and give rise to and normalize gender-based violence – and the church can help change those." She challenged all persons to "make a commitment to being non-judgmental, identify our own biases, and to do the hard work of looking inward and seeing where we need to change and grow as we contribute to making the world a safer and better place for all people."

Laurie Swink talked about how churches are *not* qualified to do the trauma-informed therapy. She said, "this requires a professional with a great deal of training. The church needs to refer persons for help who need it." She also mentioned she has been grateful for in-kind donations from churches and financial donations that help keep their ministry moving in the right direction.

Ana Stevenson responded to this question by stating "God calls on all people to protect and care for the widows, orphans, vulnerable among us." She said, "with God on our side, we have no reason to fear, and even when things seem too difficult or too much, God always shows up and makes a way." Fawn Volkert's response to this question was also powerful. She shared "when members of churches come and simply show unconditional love to the girls, something many of them have never received, you can see life come back into their eyes. Whether they are sharing a meal together and just talking, or going to the movies, or talking about Jesus you can see the transformation beginning to

happen." They shared that the current house parents are a retired pastor and his wife. They model what a healthy family dynamic is, showing that to the girls each and every day.

They both celebrated the support of churches in their area and offered that churches can help victims and survivors is by "preaching and teaching more about the power of healing on this side of eternity. Some churches say that it will happen in the next life, or others preach a prosperity gospel that makes it seem like it is your fault this happened to you, or that you are not being faithful enough. We wish churches would remind these survivors how much God loves them and cherishes them, despite what has happened to them." This strong message should be offered to churches and their pastors.

5. What Can You and Your Church Do?

The Church needs to be leading the effort around the world to eradicate trafficking. Wherever there is a crisis the traffickers are there, ready to lie and manipulate vulnerable persons into exploitive situations. Vulnerable people are lured and tricked with little to no chance of escape or survival unless someone or some organization steps in and joins the fight to free the victims. Beneath is a field guide that local churches can use to begin fighting trafficking in their community. My hope is that every church in the world uses at least one, if not several, of these options to join in the fight against trafficking.

5.1 National Human Trafficking Hot Line

The first thing you should do to help prevent human trafficking is to save the National Human Trafficking Hotline to your phone. The number is 1-888-373-7888. If you or someone else would prefer to text, the number for that is 233733. To begin the

text thread, text BEFREE or HELP to that number. This service is available in both English and Spanish. Seriously, before you keep reading further, save this number in your phone!

Another suggestion is to post signage in restrooms around your church's campus, the school your child attends, and as many other public places as you can. The National Human Trafficking Hotline has a helpful and simple flyer available to download on their website.[181] I have seen this poster in airports across the country and in a doctor's office restroom while waiting for a family during a surgery. The more places this can be posted the better. Another suggestion is to post your local domestic violence or sexual abuse shelter's contact information next to the trafficking information. You can never be sure how someone will identify with all they have endured.

5.2 Apps to Download and Websites to Visit

David Batstone, founder, and president of Not For Sale, an anti-human trafficking organization said: "Every product has a story. I know that I am not the only person who does not want to wear people's tragedy. I do not want to consume their suffering with my morning cup of coffee. I would hope that everyone who touches a product that I buy had their lives enhanced by their participation in its production."[182] We live in a consumer driven society. The products we purchase to wear, consume, decorate, and enjoy are made somewhere. It is up to governments, labor organizations, and companies to set and follow ethical guidelines on treatment of workers in production. It is up to consumers to

[181] "Downloadable Awareness Materials." National Human Trafficking Hotline. Accessed July 18, 2023. https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/resources/downloadable-awareness-materials.
[182] "Not For Sale - Homepage - End Modern Day Slavery In Our Lifetime." n.d. Accessed June 29, 2023. https://www.notforsalecampaign.org/.

be educated on where their products are made and if the products are sourced with ethical standards.

The first recommendation for this research is The Slavery Footprint.[183] This quiz allows you to enter information about yourself, your life, product preferences, and see approximately how many slaves work for you on a daily basis. When I first did this quiz, I was horrified at the results, and it led me to begin shopping for different brands and supporting different stores. This might seem small, but when more people know and act, the results can be significant. In this exercise, you can see first-hand how the products you consume can be traced to known trafficking situations. You can see how vast human trafficking is and how your decisions continue to contribute to its growth. I encourage you to pause reading the paper and go take the quiz. It is quite the reality check.

Another resource to look into is the Department of Labor's Child Labor Report for 2022. This document is lengthy but provides data worth knowing. The purpose of the report is as follows:

> The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL or the Department) has produced this tenth edition of the List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor in accordance with the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), as amended. The TVPRA requires USDOL's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB or the Bureau) to 'develop and make available to the public a list of goods from countries that [ILAB] has reason to believe are produced by forced labor or child labor in violation of international standards' (TVPRA List or the List; 22 U.S.C. § 7112(b)(2)(C)). It also requires submission of the TVPRA List to the United States Congress not later than December 1, 2014, and every 2 years thereafter (22 U.S.C. § 7112(b)(3)).[184]

Prior to 2000, this document did not exist. We have made progress, and while the numbers are terrifying, this is a great start. There are two phone applications I

[183] To access the quiz visit: https://slaveryfootprint.org // "Slavery Footprint." n.d. Accessed April 29, 2023. https://slaveryfootprint.org/.
[184] To access the full report visit: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2021/2022-TVPRA-List-of-Goods-v3.pdf

recommend downloading as well to increase your knowledge and awareness. The first is called Sweat and Toil and the second is called Comply Chain. For your reference, and to ensure you have found the correct app, see the artwork on the next page:

Sweat and Toil Logo *Comply Chain Logo*

"Sweat and Toil: child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking around the world - is a comprehensive resource developed by the US Department of Labor documenting child labor and forced labor worldwide."[185] This application allows you to select a product and see which countries utilize child labor, forced labor, or forced child labor to make and export it. It is eye opening to see some of the realities.

"Comply Chain is several business tools for labor compliance and global supply chains. The app targets companies and industry groups seeking to develop robust social compliance systems for their global production. Comply chain provides practical, step-by-step guide, critical elements of social compliance, and is designed for companies that do not have a social compliance system in place or those needing to strengthen their

[185] Description of the Application found on the Apple Application Store.

existing systems."[186] I would suggest that you are a business owner or work for a business that these apps would be worthy of downloading and learning more about. The app presents eight steps which are found on the homepage after downloading the app:

1. Engage Stakeholders and Partners
2. Assess Risks and Impacts
3. Develop a Code of Conduct
4. Communicate and Train Across Your Supply Chain
5. Monitor Compliance
6. Remediate Violations
7. Independent Review
8. Report Performance and Engagement

I believe having these applications on your phone, telling others about them, and referring to them often keeps the conversation of trafficking and exploitation on our minds. By adjusting our practices and talking about labor trafficking often with others, we continue to raise awareness. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of care.

Lastly, the National Human Trafficking Website has a tool to find local resources. The website link is https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/find-local-services | When your reach the cite, you can put in your location and reliable resources in your area and their contact information.

5.3 Education: Know the Signs – From The A21 Campaign

The A21 Campaign has compiled an outstanding list to help people know the signs of human trafficking. I recommend printing these out and place them in visible places around your church campus / community and to familiarize yourself with them. Perhaps

[186] Ibid.

you could ask local businesses and government buildings in your community to post these as well. Here are the signs:[187]

1. Controlled by Another Person: They are accompanied by a controlling person, and do not speak on his or her own behalf, but instead defer to another person.

2. Lack of Earning: They are unable to keep his or her earnings: it is "withheld for safekeeping." In many cases, the person owes a debt they are working to pay off.

3. Overly fearful, depressed, and submission behavior: They are frightened to talk to outsiders and authorities since they are closely monitored and controlled by their trafficker(s). They may be fearful, anxious, depressed, overly submissive, and may avoid eye contact.

4. Lack of Official Identification: They are not in possession of their passports, identification, or legal documents.

5. Substance Abuse: They may show signs of drug use or drug addiction. They can be forced or coerced into drug use by his or her traffickers or turn to substance abuse to help cope with his or her enslavement.

6. Lack of Personal Belongings: They may have few or no personal possessions.

7. Deceived by a False Job Offer: Their actual job is different from the advertised job they had accepted.

8. Controlled Movement: They are transported to or from work, or live and work at the same place. They show signs that their movements are being controlled.

9. Unfamiliar with the language: They have recently arrived in the country and do not speak the language of the country—or they only know sex-related or labor-related words.

10. Bad Health and Malnutrition: They may have signs of abuse or signs of being denied food, water, sleep, and/or medical care.

11. Signs of Physical Abuse: They may have bruises, scars, and other signs of physical abuse. Victims of human trafficking are often beaten in areas that will not damage their appearance, such as their lower back.

[187] "Human Trafficking | A21." n.d. Accessed June 29, 2023. https://www.a21.org/content/human-trafficking/gqe0rc. I also received permission verbally via a ZOOM call with Natalie Salinas, from the A21 Campaign, via a zoom call on June 20, 2023.

12. Lack of Trust: They may be distrustful and suspicious. A victim of human trafficking may act as if they distrust any person who offers them assistance or attempts to converse with them.

13. Signs of Dependence: They may demonstrate affection, attachment, or dependence toward their abuser.

14. Feelings of Being Trapped: They feel that they are unable to leave their current situation.

5.4 Watch It Happening

Reading about trafficking is one thing but seeing it with your own eyes is another. More and more documentaries and short films are being produced to share stories and testimonies. I am grateful to the team at Human Right Careers, who assembled a list of 9 documentaries and explanations of each. After correspondence with an administrator of the website I have received permission to share their work here for reference.[188]

#1. Brides and Brothels: The Rohingya Trade (2018)

From: Al Jazeera English | Available on: YouTube

After escaping Myanmar's brutal military, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya girls and women seek safety in Bangladesh. However, the refugee camps are anything but safe. This 25-minute documentary from Al Jazeera English centers on what happens in those camps that shelter almost a million refugees. Facing financial hardships, families sell their female relatives into child marriages. Many also end up in brothels after being promised good work. The documentary, which is available on YouTube, follows the stories of three girls. It reveals that the risk of trafficking doesn't go away after people escape a conflict. While the world may believe that the Rohingya women are safe once they leave Myanmar, they're actually entering a new hell.

The conditions shown in the 2018 documentary have likely only gotten worse. In February 2021, a military coup deposed the democratically elected Myanmar government. Hundreds of thousands were displaced, which significantly increased the risk of human trafficking. Efforts to stop trafficking have also decreased as the military

[188] Email correspondence with Robert Fellner on June 1, 2023 at admin@humanrightscareers.com. Email record in my inbox.

regime focuses on punishing political enemies and targeting religious and ethnic minorities.

#2. Sex Trafficking in America (2019)

Directed by: Jezza Neumann | Available on: PBS Frontline

Filmed over three years, this 54-minute documentary from PBS Frontline takes a look at sex trafficking in the United States. At 16, Kat was kidnapped and trafficked by men she met online. Through her story, the film explores how victims are chosen, groomed, and sold. In the documentary, Kat says that she didn't even know something like that was possible in the US. The film also follows a unique police unit based in Phoenix. They fight sex trafficking through techniques like undercover social media operations. While "Sex Trafficking in America" reveals the trauma of trafficking, it also offers a glimmer of hope.

Jezza Neumann, whose first film was about trafficking in China, became interested in the issue in the US after talking to Kevin Bales, a professor specializing in modern-day slavery. PBS Frontline has been running since 1983 and focuses on hard-hitting topics. Each broadcast is a stand-alone feature-length documentary. "Sex Trafficking in America" is available to watch for free on the PBS Frontline website.

#3. By the Name of Tania (2019)

Directed by: Bénédicte Liénard and Mary Jiménez | Available on: Tubi

While technically not a documentary, this film is based on eyewitness accounts. While working on other projects in Peru, the filmmakers encountered stories of poverty, trafficking, and other traumas. "Tania" is a composite character created using real stories. In the film, Tania tries to leave her small Peruvian village for a better life, but she's soon forced into sex work. The film features first-person narration, striking shots of Tania and her community, and the natural beauty of the Amazon.

The project began when the filmmakers met a former prospector held prisoner in Peru's gold mining area. He told them the story of how at 15 years old, he tried to leave with a woman he'd met at a brothel. Struck by the story, the filmmakers went looking for more information. They ended up meeting women in the area's brothels and a police officer who gave them a USB containing testimonies from girls he'd helped escape trafficking. With these stories, the filmmakers created "Tania."

#4. Food Chains (2014)

Directed by: Sanjay Rawal | Available on: Amazon Prime (to rent)

In Florida, migrant farmworkers spend hours in the fields picking vegetables and fruit for huge food corporations. The manual labor is hard enough, but farmworkers are frequently exploited, sexually abused, and harmed in a myriad of other ways. While supermarkets make trillions of dollars every day, the people responsible for working the fields face awful conditions and low wages. “Food Chains” focuses on a group of tomato pickers who form the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. To raise awareness of their working conditions and demand more than a penny per pound of tomatoes, they go on strike.

When discussing human trafficking, many people forget about agriculture, where exploitation and abuse are long-persisting issues. In 2015, “Food Chains” won the James Beard Foundation Award for Special/Documentary. It received additional praise from the media and has a 91% score on Rotten Tomatoes. The film is available in both English and Spanish.

#5. Ghost Fleet (2019)

Directed by: Shannon Service and Jeffrey Waldron | Available on: Apple TV, Prime Video, Tubi

With a premiere at Toronto International Film Festival in 2018, this documentary focuses on the slave trade that powers Indonesia’s seafood industry and a group of activists committed to changing it. Being responsible for a huge part of the world’s seafood supply is a tall order, but there aren’t enough fishermen. To meet demand, the industry is rife with human trafficking. People from Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, and other places are sold to fishing fleets for a few hundred dollars apiece. Abused and kept in cages, these enslaved fishermen can go for months or even years without leaving the ships.

While many human trafficking documentaries focus on sex slavery, it’s important to remember that forced labor also affects millions of people. “Ghost Fleet” brings the situation to light. Viewers are also forced to reckon with their own ethics and consumption of seafood that likely comes from sources that use slave labor.

#6. The Dark Side of Chocolate (2010)

Directed by: Miki Mistrati and U. Roberto Romano | Available on: Youtube

Fresh produce and seafood aren’t the only food industries affected by trafficking. For decades, slavery has fueled the chocolate industry. Places like West Africa are especially dependent on child labor for their cocoa production. The film begins in Germany with questions to vendors about suppliers. The journey continues to Mali and then the Ivory Coast, where children are enslaved on cocoa plantations. Huge corporations like Nestle use that chocolate, and despite promises to stop, very few changes have been made. Deadlines for complying with new rules kept getting pushed back.

Directors Miki Mistrati and U. Roberto Romano used secret cameras to film much of this documentary. In 2012, it was nominated for the Adolf Grimme Award in the Information & Culture category. Have things changed much since this film came out? Big companies have made lots of promises, but slavery is still a huge problem for the industry. The 46-minute documentary is currently available to watch for free on Youtube.

#7. The Apology (2016)

Directed by: Tiffany Hsiung | Available on: Tubi and Amazon Prime (rental)

During WWII, the Imperial Japanese Army forced around 200,000 women and girls into sexual slavery. Known as "comfort women," these women were kept at "comfort stations" that Japanese soldiers visited when they needed a sexual outlet. Japanese women were among the first victims, but women from across occupied territories were kidnapped or tricked with promises of legitimate work. "The Apology" follows three women from the Philippines, who after decades of silence and shame, share their experiences while seeking a formal apology from the Japanese government.

"The Apology" is a powerful film showing the lasting effects of sexual slavery on survivors, as well as their strength. It won a 2018 Peabody Award after airing on PBS. It's available for free on Tubi.

#8. Children of War (2010)

Directed by: Brian Single | Available on: Kanopy (with a public library card or university login)

The Lord's Resistance Army, a militant group led by Joseph Kony, has been accused of human rights violations like murder, child-sex slavery, mutilation, and using child soldiers since 1987. While not as active today, the group leaves behind a long legacy of pain and trauma. Filmed over three years, "Children of War" follows a group of former child soldiers as they try to heal in a rehabilitation center with the help of counselors.

Since its premiere at the United States Institute of Peace, the documentary has received a handful of awards, such as the Justice Award from the Cinema for Peace Foundation in Berlin. It's also been screened by organizations like Amnesty International and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

#9. Machines (2016)

Directed by: Rahul Jain| Available on: Amazon Prime (rental), Apple TV

Sweatshops are dangerous, exploitative, and responsible for producing many of the clothes we wear today. In this documentary, Ruhal Jain gains access to one of the

thousands of textile mills in Suchin, India. Viewers witness the dehumanizing practices, dangerous conditions, and suffering of workers hidden in these buildings. They describe what their lives are like, which include grueling 12-hour workdays and long commutes.

"Machines" played at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017 and premiered in New York at the Museum of Modern Art. It has a 92% approval rating from Rotten Tomatoes. The film is in Hindi with English subtitles.

Each of these documentaries help paint a picture of what trafficking looks like around the world. Consider hosting a movie night at your church to show one of these films to begin opening people's eyes. You would certainly want to view the film first and be able to offer a trigger warning for those in attendance and provide childcare, if appropriate, so parents with young children could attend. I would also recommend providing a time for reflection and conversation after the film is over. Be prepared for those who have just watched the film may be in shock. Action steps that night may be appropriate based on your context and level of interest prior to the event. It is one thing to read about it, or to listen to a story about it, but it is a whole new feeling when you see it happening in ways that impact your country or community.

5.5 Financial Partnerships with Local and Global Partners

Anti-trafficking work is expensive, it is time consuming, and with no guarantee that everything will work out the way a person plans. Another reality is that not everyone can wake up one day, start a non-profit, and get to work. The web of trafficking is huge. It requires the collaboration of law enforcement, governments, safe houses, churches, non-profits, social workers, counselors, rehabs, and more to help a person fully move forward with their new life. Identification and recovery take time, team building, establishing trust, and creativity. Being trafficked is traumatizing. It can take years, and

even a lifetime to help a person manage or move forward. Prosecution, protection, and prevention all need resources to succeed.

My encouragement to you as the reader would be pick an organization and make it a part of your regular giving. If you are passionate about this, which I hope you are – find a group and support the fight with your wallet. I do not want to sound unhopeful, but without money, we cannot stop human trafficking or assist with those recovering from it. When giving to reputable organizations such as the ones I have written about in this thesis, one can feel like they are truly making a difference. A specific fund I would offer is the Polaris Resilience Fund via the Polaris Project. This fund "offers direct cash assistance, no strings attached to human trafficking survivors to use in whatever they see fit. In doing so, the Resilience Fund gives survivors back exactly what their traffickers stole from them – control over their own lives."[189] Your giving can have an impact in Florida, Washington D.C, New York, Thailand, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Costa Rico, Brazil, and wherever else you chose. Your dollars can change the trafficking landscape across the world and help make a real difference.

Lastly, be creative. Ask others to partner with you in giving. There are countless ways to fundraise for partner organizations in the fight against human trafficking. Plan a 5k, host a freedom walk, ask for donations in your small group. The possibilities are endless, and the impact is lifechanging.[190]

[189] "The Resilience Fund." Polaris, September 1, 2023. https://polarisproject.org/the-resilience-fund/.
[190] "Walk For Freedom | A21." n.d. Accessed June 29, 2023. https://www.a21.org/content/walk-for-freedom/gtr2s8.

5.6 Podcasts

Podcasts continue to be an excellent source of information. While there are many more podcasts available then the ones I have listed here, these five that I have screened and recommend. I have not listened to every single episode of every series, but in sampling I find these podcasts are excellent, truthful, well researched, and thought-provoking.

1. *The Fight of My Life* – by International Justice Mission - Finding Ruby", the first season of *The Fight of My Life* is a 6-part immersive true-crime tale. Join Ruby on her remarkable true story; a journey from the protection of the mountains to the nightmare of an online sex-trafficking den, from the heat of the courtroom to the cool of the aftercare shelter, from fear to freedom, from captivity to restoration, from being lost to being truly found. Through in-depth interviews with International Justice Mission (IJM) personnel, police, experts in the law, and experts on the ground, listeners are given a backstage pass to see just what is involved in a rescue operation of this sort, what it takes to fight for justice, and how we can all play a part in stopping this crime hidden in plain sight.[191]

2. *On the Frontlines* – by the A21 Campaign. In this podcast, we will unpack the problem of human trafficking, share powerful stories from the frontlines, hear from thought-leaders in the fight for freedom, and equip you to make a difference–right where you are.

3. *Ending Human Trafficking Podcast* – by Dr. Sandra Morgan - The Global Center for Women and Justice launched the Ending Human Trafficking podcast in April 2011, and it has passed the 160 podcast milestone as of January 2018. Our mantra is Study the Issues. Be a voice. Make a difference. We believe that if you do not study first, you may say or do the wrong thing. The National Family and Youth Services Clearinghouse promoted EHT as “a good way to get up to speed on human trafficking”. Our audience includes students, community leaders, and even government leaders. EHT listeners come from all corners of the world, which accomplishes our mission of building a global community that works together to end human exploitation.

4. *Felonious Florida – Season 3* – This show is all about human trafficking in Florida. Beyond the beaches, the theme parks, the palm trees, and the warm breezes lies the dark side of the Sunshine State. The podcast

[191] Each of these explanations come from the Apple Podcasts description unless otherwise noted below.

network and publisher, Wondery, and the South Florida Sun Sentinel present a true-crime podcast that bring you stories of some of Florida's most notorious and stunning crimes. A special thanks to Rev. David Killingsworth for sharing this resource with me about our home state.

5. *I Dare You* – by United Against Trafficking. "Our mission to end human trafficking is daring; human trafficking is a multi-billion-dollar industry that spans local, regional, and global communities. There are millions of trafficking victims, millions of traffickers, and millions of buyers. They not only exist worldwide, but they reside in our own communities. Our podcast empowers you with practical, actionable ways to combat trafficking starting in your own neighborhood. By intersecting, data-driven facts, inspiring stories, and practical application, our podcast will equip community members to be effective anti-trafficking activists."[192]

By searching human trafficking wherever you find your podcast several others will be available, but verify the producer and organization affiliated with it as there is a great deal of sensationalism around the topic. Verify that the organization connected to the podcast is legitimate. Research who is the host and see if they have training, experience, and credentials for leading in this conversation. I am thankful to all those who have poured countless hours into creating and producing the podcasts listed above.

5.7 Prayers

Pray every day. If all of this seems too overwhelming, if you are exhausted just reading today, I hear that, and I understand. When I first learned about this I was practically paralyzed in my chair. As I learned more, I got madder and madder. It fueled my family and I to be a part of fixing and talking about the problem rather than sitting back and letting someone else do it. We learned this all starts and ends with prayer. We

[192] "Podcast | UAHT." n.d. Accessed June 12, 2023. https://uaht.org/i-dare-you-human-trafficking-podcast/.

can all do this. Below are several prayers that Jessica Bledsoe and I authored. In appendix three, there are several others for your use as well.

5.7.1 Prayers for Victims of Trafficking

God of the Universe, right now, we lift up victims of human trafficking around the world. Many of them are hidden in plain sight. Many are locked away physically or emotionally in places we did not even know existed. And yet you know exactly who they are and where they are. May your Holy Spirit draw near to them. May you protect them. May you use us to help rescue them and restore hope and healing to their lives. Amen.

5.7.2 Prayers for Survivors of Trafficking

Oh Lord on this day, and in this hour, we pray for survivors of human trafficking. We ask that you provide them the counseling and therapy they need to move towards mental and emotional healing. We ask that you provide doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals to heal their physical needs. We pray that you would use churches and individuals to create more safe houses and transitional homes so that each of these persons may rest and recover. We pray for teachers to support survivors obtain their educational goals. We pray that individuals will come forward to share their gifts and talents with survivors so they could find a job, a passion, or discover something they did not even know existed that will bring them joy. Most of all God, we pray for total healing for survivors. May they know that healing is possible on this side of eternity. May they know that with you, despite all that has happened, one can still have a life full of love, peace, and purpose ahead of them. Draw near to them, and may your Holy Spirit be poured out abundantly on them, and in their lives each and every day. Amen.

5.7.3 Prayers for Ending Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery

Oh God, you are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning in the end. While slavery has existed for as long as humanity has existed, we pray that you would use us to help end it forever. Modern day slavery is evil. Help us to have eyes to see those in need of assistance and support. Transform us from the inside out so that we see the world the way that you see it. Make us instruments to do your will. We ask that those who are trapped in human trafficking will be set free. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Jesus, you came to set the captives free. We ask now that you use us, empower us, and equip us to carry on your ministry today. Amen.

Holy Spirit, often times when we think of human trafficking, we think to ourselves, what could I possibly do to make a difference? We humbly ask that you reveal an answer to us. Speak to us and lead us in your path for our lives. We thank you for listening to us, for hearing us, and for responding to us. Amen.

5.7.4 Prayer for Those Committing Human Trafficking

God of Power and God of Might we come to you now with anger, confusion, and questions in our heart. How could someone become a trafficker of another human being? We know that evil exists in this world. Human trafficking is a part of that evil, and there are those who commit these crimes each and every day. Today, we boldly pray that you would change their hearts and change their minds. Instead of torturing, raping, abusing, and profiting from other men, women, and children – we call upon you to transform traffickers into liberators, and to change the world one person at a time. We know this is a bold prayer, but you are a God who can do extraordinary things. We ask that you work in the lives of traffickers around the world, right here and right now. Amen.

5.7.5 Prayers for Those Actively Fighting Human Trafficking

Almighty God, we pray for those currently involved in the fight against human trafficking. We pray for our government and its leaders here in the United States, and across the globe. We pray for law enforcement, who bravely search the streets day and night, for those who are being trafficked. We pray for our judicial system, attorneys, judges, and all of those who have the power and responsibility of seeking justice for human trafficking victims. We pray for service providers that provide housing, therapy, food, life skills, coaching, and so many other things to victims and their families. May your expansive wisdom, your unrelenting grace, and the hope that only you can provide be evident in all of these persons lives. Help them today, our God. Amen.

5.7.6 A Prayer for the Church to Step Into the Gap

Jesus, we know that you love the church. We know that you love its people, and you love all people across our planet, as they are all created in your image. Today we ask that you speak the hearts of those who claim to love your church. May you speak to them in body, mind, and spirit to persuade them to come forward and be a part of a solution instead of the problem. We know all too well the many different facets of human trafficking, and all of your children will need to get involved to end it in our lifetime. May your Holy Spirit change us all from the inside out, and may the church lead the way in fighting human trafficking here, there, and everywhere.

5.8 Host a Freedom Sunday

International Justice Mission has created an entire Sunday toolkit for hosting a Freedom Sunday. Their website describes it this way:

> Freedom Sunday is an opportunity for your entire church family to deepen their understanding of God's heart for justice, discover the realities of modern slavery and join the fight to end it. Join over 15,000 churches around the world who have hosted a Freedom Sunday and used their voice to stand up for justice. Sign up today and you'll get step-by-step planning guides, sermon tools and a variety of free resources for both adults and children.[193]

I have hosted a freedom Sunday each year of my ministry based on the IJM Model. I have elected though to host my Freedom Sunday during the month of January, which is International Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Each year when I announce the theme for that Sunday, inevitably, someone on my staff or leadership team gets nervous and says that people will say, "this is not a topic for church" or "this is not appropriate." Let me encourage you nobody has ever said that to me. The Holy Spirit shows up in a mighty way on these Sundays and speaks to the hearts and minds of people who are in attendance in person, and on-line. This is also a Sunday that can attract visitors if you advertise it in your community.

My prayer is that you will take one Sunday a year and either invite IJM to speak, another organization to present, or that you as a pastor or leader in your church will use a sermon provided for you in the appendices of this thesis, or you will craft your own with God's leading. You can do it! Thank you for doing it.

5.9 Partnering with Local Law Enforcement

Laurie Swink, the founder of Selah Freedom mentioned in chapter four that fighting trafficking requires the work of service providers, law enforcement, and the

[193] "Freedom Sunday | International Justice Mission." n.d. IJM USA. Accessed June 8, 2023. https://www.ijm.org/freedom-sunday.

judicial system working in tandem to create harsher laws, arresting and prosecuting traffickers, those who buy victims, and those to care for the survivors once they are outside of the life. A great way to get involved is to find your local anti-trafficking organization and see if they are currently partnering with law enforcement. If they are not, request a meeting with someone in leadership in the police or sheriff's department and ask what they are doing about trafficking in your community. If you do not ask, how will you know?

A word of caution is to not march in there demanding they work harder or do more. Our law enforcement officers already carry a tremendous burden and do outstanding workday in and day out. I would encourage you to build a relationship with them, offer support to their department, and come prepared with a few suggestions and ideas that might improve the way they deal with suspected traffickers, buyers, and victims. Remember, this work is all about partnerships and building bridges.

When partnering with local law enforcement Ambassador (ret.) Susan Coppedge shared a valuable way of doing this is advocating that those who have been trafficked should not be prosecuted for the crimes they committed while they were being trafficking. In an article entitled *Stop Criminalizing the Victims* she wrote:

> The ramifications of a criminal record are very real, whether for a survivor of sex trafficking who cannot get a job or rent an apartment because of prior arrests for prostitution; a domestic worker who has fled her abusive household and needs protection but instead is penalized for violating U.S. immigration laws; or those forced by organized criminal groups to produce, transport, and sell drugs. This is a reality many local governments and law enforcement officials are grappling with because of the growing awareness about human trafficking, also known as modern slavery, and an understanding of who the victims are. We now know that some of the very people being criminalized are those that need the most protection.[194]

[194] Coppedge, Susan. "Stop Criminalizing the Victims." CNN, March 17, 2016. https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/17/opinions/coppedge-freedom-project-new-lives/index.html.

I recommend reading the article in its entirety as it shows to us a side of this conversation that many might not think about. These victims have to rebuild their lives. If they are already starting with very little, and a criminal record is added to that, what chance as society are we giving them to become whole again? Ambassador (ret.) Susan Coppedge concluded her article with an appropriate word to conclude this section of the thesis as well. "There are survivors in every state in this nation who need to be heard, who need laws that allow them to erase their nonviolent criminal convictions resulting from their prior exploitation. Trafficking survivors deserve a fresh start and a future full of possibilities and potential, without the stigma and pain of human trafficking haunting them forever."195 There is work to be done today. There is work to do tomorrow. It will require partnerships with church, non-profits, governments, and law enforcement to make a real difference.

5.10 Know your Local, State, and National Officials

For any real changes to occur, they need to happen at every level of government. While significant work has been done, there is a tremendous amount of work left to do. Duke Divinity School Dean, Edgardo A. Colón-Emeric, wrote in an email reflecting on racial injustices around the world, was reminded of the old saying, "We are not where we need to be, but we are not where we used to be." I believe this applies to current reality of government involvement today when it comes to human trafficking. Here are a few ideas and places to begin using your voice, or your fingertips to make a difference.

Here is the link to contact the White House: https://www.usa.gov/agencies/white-house

Here is a link to find your Governor: https://www.usa.gov/state-governor

[195] Ibid.

Here is a link to find your Senators: https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm

Here is a link to find your Representative to Congress: https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative

Here is a link to find your Attorney General: https://www.usa.gov/state-attorney-general

Here is a link to find your United States Attorney: https://www.justice.gov/usao/find-your-united-states-attorney

Here is a link to find information about your local government: https://www.usa.gov/local-governments

I would recommend creating a document with all of these person's names, emails, phone numbers, and other pertinent contact information. Then I would recommend speaking to them at least annually by phone or letter, stating you would like to see more being done about human trafficking. Ask them to be the leader on this issue and tell them that you would like to help them.

5.11 Dressember and the Power of Your Wardrobe

As the anti-trafficking movement has gained traction, many have become creative in using their wardrobe to advocate for ending human trafficking. One woman who felt helpless in the fight had background in fashion. Not knowing what to do, she decided to wear a dress every day of December to advocate against human trafficking. What started as a small campaign called "Dressember" has grown into a nonprofit partnering with 15 partner anti-trafficking organizations and raising over $18 million for global partners to use for prevention, advocacy, intervention, and survivor empowerment programs.[196] The campaign challenges participants to wear a dress or a tie, every single day in the month of

[196] "Dressember Foundation." n.d. Dressember. Accessed June 21, 2023. https://www.dressember.org.

December. The outfit choice often inspires curiosity in observers, creating an opportunity to talk about human trafficking and why fundraising for prevention and treatment is important. Over 21,000 individuals have participated in Dressember in the last decade. Here is the link for this year's event: https://dressember2023.funraise.org/start-fundraising

You can read the story about Bethany Winz's decision to wear the same dress for one year in her book *One Dress. One Year.* [197] As a young teenager, Bethany used what she wore to express her passion for social justice in the form of ending human trafficking. Her dedication attracted the attention of many and inspired her to dedicate her life to social justice. I pray that God will continue use persons of ages and abilities to be a part of this fight.

5.12 Make Your Birthday Count

Asking for donations on your birthday is becoming more and more popular. Would you consider selecting an anti-trafficking nonprofit to support via Facebook Birthday Fundraisers this year? It is a great way to raise awareness and funds with your friends both near and far. In your invitation for people to give, make sure you explain why this work matters to you and what they are supporting. It makes a difference and so can you.

5.13 Support Survivors

Various anti-trafficking organizations sell merchandise as a fundraiser and advocacy opportunity. Shop for products made by survivors through A21 Campaign's

[197] Winz, Bethany; Aughtmon, Susanna Foth. *One Dress, One Year: One Girl's Stand Against Human Trafficking.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016.

social enterprise *Liberty.*[198] Another option is to shop from Thistle Farms where you can purchase gifts like candles, oils, bath products, bags, jewelry, décor, mugs, toys, and books while supporting their mission to provide a safe place, a meaningful job, and support for survivors.[199] Amazon Wish Lists have become a helpful tool for organizations to use in supplying items for every day needs to survivors in their care. Find an organization with a wish list like, The A21 Campaign, Love 146, Selah Freedom, or a recovery center in your area and then simply add your items to your cart.[200] Purchasing a meaningful gift for your loved one becomes a tangible way of supporting children affected by trafficking.

5.14 Get Social

Use your social media platforms for good: write a post, share a story, follow anti-trafficking organizations to stay in the know of their efforts and their needs. The majority of us have powerful tools at our fingertips. Sharing information is the highest form of prevention and advocacy. Make sure what you are sharing is correct by fact checking with any organization mentioned in this thesis. Many organizations have stories and photos you can use that are available on their websites or socials. With your fingertips, you can make a difference.

5.15 Read These Books

Over the course of the last decade Jessica Bledsoe and I have worked to build a library of resources to share whenever we can. Here is a good starting place for books to

[198] "Shop | A21." n.d. Accessed June 30, 2023. https://www.a21.org/content/shop/gqv26o.
[199] "Thistle Farms." n.d. Thistle Farms. Accessed June 20, 2023. https://thistlefarms.org/.
[200] "Give to End Child Exploitation In Honor of a Loved One." n.d. Love146. Accessed June 22, 2023. https://love146.org/gift-catalog/.

read. I have provided the title of the book and a few sentences about it. It is in alphabetical order by title, not by theme, author, or based on the content.[201]

Child Trafficking: An Unconscious Phenomenon by William A. Thomas. This work begins with an introduction of the trafficking phenomenon. It then discusses the methodology used for designing their trafficking study, especially the trafficking of children. It then reports its findings and suggested intervention strategies.

Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives by Siddharth Kara. **"***Cobalt Red* is the searing, first-ever exposé of the immense toll taken on the people and environment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by cobalt mining, as told through the testimonies of the Congolese people themselves. Activist and researcher Siddharth Kara has traveled deep into cobalt territory to document the testimonies of the people living, working, and dying for cobalt. To uncover the truth about brutal mining practices, Kara investigated militia-controlled mining areas, traced the supply chain of child-mined cobalt from toxic pit to consumer-facing tech giants, and gathered shocking testimonies of people who endure immense suffering and even die mining cobalt. Cobalt is an essential component to every lithium-ion rechargeable battery made today, the batteries that power our smartphones, tablets, laptops, and electric vehicles. Roughly 75 percent of the world's supply of cobalt is mined in the Congo, often by peasants and children in sub-human conditions. Billions of people in the world cannot conduct their daily lives without participating in a human rights and environmental catastrophe in the Congo."[202]

Girls like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale, an Activist Finds Her Calling and Heals Herself by Rachel Lloyd. This book is about Rachel Lloyd and her experience in the life and her escape at the age of a teenager. She then moved to the United States and started her own nonprofit that is based in New York City which is one of the nation's most groundbreaking organizations. In the story the dark secrets of trafficking are revealed, and testimonies are shared. But practical wisdom on how to fight trafficking is also present.

Globalization, Prostitution and Sex-Trafficking: Corporeal Politics by Elina Penttinen. this work illustrates how the global sex industry feeds on complex global flows. Drawing on extensive field work on the trafficking of Russian and Baltic female sex workers, the author demonstrates how the embodiment and reiteration of globalization on the bodies of gendered individuals are tied to the larger process of globalization. The authors framework of landscapes of globalization is developed into a framework of shadow sexscapes in order to illustrate how the global sex industry feeds on the complex global flows and intern operates as a form of shadow globalization.

[201] For full citation of each of these resources refer to the bibliography on page 156-163.
[202] This is the explanation of this book from the Amazon store.

Human Trafficking Concilium by Hille Haker. Concilium is the Latin word for meeting. This book is about a collection of articles written by persons of faith on the topic of theology, the church, and human trafficking. It is a widespread survey of the problem and different countries, cultures, and religions responses.

Human Traffic, Human Rights: Redefining Victim Protection by Elaine Pearson. This work surveyed 10 different countries around the world and compared and contrasted several different topics including legislation, criminal laws, other laws, and policies affecting trafficked persons, general analysis and comparison of cases, investigation and prosecution of traffickers, procedures affecting trafficked persons, support and assistance to trafficked persons, legal redress and compensation, as well as conclusions and recommendations.

In Our Backyard: Human Trafficking in America and What We Can Do to Stop It by Nita Belles. This book the reader everything they need to know about human trafficking specifically in the United States. She helps identify risk factors, take practical steps to keep your loved ones and neighbor safe from predators, and recognizing trafficking all around you in order to help fight it.

Ma'am Anna: The Remarkable Story of a Human Trafficking Rescuer by Athony Bunk, Anna Rodrigues, and Mike Josephson. This book shares first-hand accounts of Anna Rodriguez- a victims advocate turned international human trafficking rescuer in Southwest Florida. Anna Rodriguez is the CEO and Founder of the Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking and has received worldwide attention as a modern-day abolitionist emulating how one person can make a difference in the fight against human trafficking.

One Dress, One Year: One Girl's Stand against Human Trafficking by Bethany Winz. This book is about a 16-year-old named Bethany Winz who learned about the tens of millions of men, women, and children trapped around the world and slavery. She then decided to wear the same black dress every day for a year to raise money and awareness. The story is about her efforts to do something about the problem in practical realities we face in the United States and around the world.

Renting Lacy: A story of America's prostituted children by Linda Thiwai Smith and Cindy Coloma. In this call to action, U.S. Representative Linda Smith outlines the realities of sexually exploited children across the globe. Smith founded Shared Hope International which aims to serve the ling-term restoration needs of women and children in crisis. Her call-to-action reviews legislation and advises next action steps for the fight against human trafficking.

Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking by Ryszard W Piotrowicz, Rijken Conny, and Heide Baerbel. This work is about the international and regional regimes on anti-

trafficking, types of exploitation, particular legal issues, needs of victims of trafficking, critical discourses of the anti-trafficking framework, statistics data and knowledge, actors' stakeholders and institutions, economic aspects, and serves as a primary work on human trafficking from international perspective.

Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings: All Roads Lead to America by Sheldon Zhang. This book examines how for-profit human smuggling and trafficking activities to the United States are carried out and explores the legal and policy changes of dealing with these problems. It covers the scope and patterns of global human trafficking and smuggling activities, the strategies and methods employed by various groups to bring individuals into the United States, major smuggling routes and venues, the involvement of organized criminal organizations and transnational human smuggling activities, and the challenges confronting the United States government in combating all of these activities.

Stolen: The True Story of a Sex Trafficking Survivor by Katariina Rosenblatt. This work is about Katariina Rosenblatt who is a survivor of sex trafficking who shares her harrowing experiences, her escape, and her passionate efforts to now free other victims. She shows that not only a sex trafficking happening frighteningly close to home, but it's also something that can be stopped. It is a warning, celebration of survival, and a beacon of hope.

The Justice Calling: Where Passion Meets Perseverance by Bethany H. Hoang. This book is about justice. It ranges in conversations from justice and God, righteousness, creation, the fall, Israel, Jesus, the church, and how through it all – everything is being made new. This work will be central to my exegetical reflections on how our God is a God of justice and why God cares about victims of human trafficking.

The Politics of Trafficking: The First International Movement to Combat the Sexual Exploitation of Women by Stephanie A. Limoncelli. This book highlights that over the last several decades the politics of trafficking have become immensely difficult. Each nation has their own laws and expectations. It is no longer just a fix the problem type situation. There are several layers that must be addressed in order to make any real substantive change. This work will be helpful in exploring the global realities of trafficking and prosecution.

The Scourge of Human Trafficking: Modern-Day Slavery. By the African Forum for Catholic Social Teachings, Edited by Janice McLaughlin. The African forum for Catholic social teaching recently turned a spotlight on the underworld of human trafficking at a conference in December 2015. This volume is a collection of the presentations from South Africa, Nigeria, Mozambique, and Kenya that puts a human face on the phenomenon and documents efforts being taken to prevent it and support its survivors.

The slave across the street: The true story of how an American teen survived the world of human trafficking by Theresa L. Flores and Peggy Sue Wells. In her memoir, Theresa Flores illustrates how human trafficking is not only a crime taking place in foreign countries but is happening right next door. Her story of hope and education as a counselor and license clinical social worker shed light on the inner workings of human trafficking as well as provide prevention tools for teens in modern day America.

The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today by Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter. This book is about slavery in "the land of the free". It explains the difference between the many different types of trafficking we see in the United States. The second half speaks of the realities we as a nation faced as well as several resources for how people in their own individual lives can fight back. It also offers appendices with other resources. From a first glance this book appears to be the most similar to what I am hoping this thesis turns into.

The White Umbrella: Walking with Survivors of Sex Trafficking by Mary Frances Bowley. This book examines the background, survivor stories, recovery programs, and mental, spiritual, and complex emotional needs of women and girls at Atlanta-based program Wellspring Living. The organization serves as a recovery home for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and outpatient counseling center, and a program for child survivors of forces prostitution and sex trafficking.

Trafficked: The Diary of a Sex Slave by Sibel Hodge. This is fictional novella inspired by victim's accounts and research on human trafficking. In diary form, the novella explores the realities of sex slaves and a story of rescue.

6. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have highlighted the eight major types of trafficking that are happening around our world today. Testimonies of survivors have been shared to begin to imagine what being trapped in modern day slavery looks like. Scripture has been studied to think about the conversation of trafficking from a Biblical perspective. It is overwhelmingly clear that all persons are made in the image of God and have worth, dignity, and purpose. Slavery is a perversion of the dignity God intends for all of us. Experts from across the state of Florida shared their wisdom and experience how to join

and make a difference in the fight against trafficking. The final chapter offered 15 concrete ways that you and your church can get engaged in this conversation right now.

My hope is that, after reading this, the Holy Spirit will speak to you and convict you. My prayer is that Jesus will call you by name and will you use to speak up and speak out for those who need it most in your community and around the world. Please know that if you accept this challenge that God will be walking alongside you each step of the way, and God will be leading your steps. Please also know that I am praying for you. Thank you for reading this, and may God richly bless you – not only today, but in all of your days to come. Amen.

Appendix A – Sermon to Use for a Freedom Sunday #1

This is a sermon I preached in January 2022 at the church I serve. I followed this sermon with a 10-minute interview with the local anti-trafficking organization in my community to shed more light on what is happening in our community and how people can get involved. Feel free to use as much or as little of this sermon as you would like as you craft yours. Thank you for being a prophet in our time and taking up this challenging conversation for the pulpit.

1. Opening Example Stories of Trafficking and Forced Labor

Could you imagine waking up each day at 4:00 in the morning and being told to head to the labor yard? No breakfast, no coffee, but straight to work. Then finally around 11:00 you get to stop and eat a bowl of hastily made, what we would generously call soup. Then it is right back to work making bricks in the heat of the day. This continues until 6:00 in the evening. At the end of the day, you are put back on a bus and returned to the living quarters, which is a prison style bunk room with several other people. You then receive another inadequate meal, and collapse into bed because 4:00AM is coming again. This is the daily story for thousands of people living in India who were told they'd receive a great job if they left their town and worked with the wonderful employer a few hours away. They were lied to, and then forced into labor to pay for their housing and food, which is terrible.

Another story, that is similar but different, is about a child named Foli. He was a young boy forced to work 19-hour days on his uncle's fishing boat in Ghana. His grandfather was hit by a car in the local market and his uncle agreed to make sure he got to school each day. Instead, he took him to a lake, hours away where he found several other boys his age who also went to work everyday fishing. Again, they received little food, hardly any sleep, and never time for children to do what children should be doing.[203]

2. Trigger Warning for Families

This morning church we're going to take time to think about what I believe is one of the worst types, and perhaps, one of the most despicable crimes on planet earth – modern-day slavery and other forms of human trafficking. I feel it is important I give a warning to those of who perhaps have your children or grandchildren with you in worship this morning. This is going to be a challenging sermon to hear. There might be a few words or

[203] *Stories of rescue: International justice mission*. IJM USA. (n.d.). Retrieved October 25, 2021, from https://www.ijm.org/stories.

concepts that our younger members might not understand. So, I leave the decision to you if you'd like to take them to Treasure Island for Children's Church, or if you'd prefer to have them stay – perhaps a follow up conversation at lunch after church would be wise.

3. Definition & statistics of human trafficking

The reality of the human story on planet earth is that there has always been violence, abuse, and forms of slavery. The powerful prey on the weak. Those with resources take advantage of those without, for their own benefit and gain. The influential use their authority for their own means, instead of caring for the means of the other. As time continues to go on, despite advances in human rights, stricter legislation, and nonprofits and churches stepping into the fight, there are more slaves on planet earth than at any other time in human history.

According to several of the largest anti-human trafficking organizations that are currently fighting the good fight, there are estimated 40.3 million people in some form of trafficking today. "There are more people enslaved today than any other time in history. It is a 150 billion dollar a year industry. It is comprised of 71% women, 29% men, and 25% children. It happens in every country. 5.4 out of every 1,000 people in the world are enslaved."

The Department of Justice defines Human Trafficking as "a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations define human trafficking as:

> a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
> b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (22 U.S.C. § 7102(9))."

There are two primary forms of trafficking. The first is forced labor. Examples of forced labor include cutting down trees, fishing on boats, brick kilns, factory work, farming, domestic labor, and soliciting. People are forced to work dangerous and grueling jobs for little to no pay. The second is sex trafficking. "The average age a child enters into sex trafficking is 14-16 years old." This math equation might shock you, but let's say that a pimp, or a trafficker has 3 women or girls under his power. And the average girl is raped 15 or 20 times a night at $50 per time. That is $3,000 a night for the pimp. And let's say he works the victims 350 nights a year – that is $1,050,000, and you better believe he is not putting that on his taxes.

Human trafficking is the second largest global criminal industry estimated at an annual $150 billion. Unlike drugs or illegal weapons, human beings are reusable and often abused over a period of time all for the profit their trafficker. Human Trafficking is real, and it's been around for a long time. And the only way it is ever going to end is if

people like you and I step up and say – not anymore. Good things happen in this world when like-minded people come together and fight for what is right.

4. The Story of Ruth

There's a powerful story in the Old Testament about three people named Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. This book of the bible is written during a difficult time for the people of Israel. It occurred during the time of the judges – a period of disobedience, idolatry, and violence.

The story begins when a man named Elimelech moves his family to Moab from Bethlehem because of a severe famine. Elimelech took his wife and two sons along the journey. His wife's name is Naomi. Once they arrived in Moab, Elimelech died leaving Naomi and their two sons behind. The two sons then married two Moabite women, one named Orpah – and another named Ruth. "But about ten years later, both of the sons died and left Naomi alone, without her husbands or sons."[204] This meant Naomi was now in a foreign land without the protection or resources for survival that she had while sons and husband were alive. To make matters worse, famine had now come to Moab.

Naomi heard that there was food in Bethlehem again, so she packed everything up and prepared to head back home. And as the journey began, she stopped and told Orpah and Ruth to go back to their own homes and families. She said she had nothing left to give them, and for them to live a happy and full life they needed to be away from her. Their future prospects were much safer going back to their homeland than venturing into the unknown as vulnerable widows.

They all wept, and eventually Orpah left, but Ruth pleaded with Naomi to let her come along. Ruth showed an outstanding act of loyalty when she said, "Do not ask me to turn my back on you. I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"[205] At this point, Naomi agrees and the two continue on the journey to the old, and new home. When they arrived, it was the start of the barley festival, and food was plentiful.

One day, Ruth said to Naomi, let me go out into the fields and glean leftover crops from whoever will let me. She found herself in a field owned by a man named Boaz, who come to find out, was a relative of Elimelech. To make a long story short, she was greeted by Boaz who treated her favorably. He gave her water, lunch, and told his workers to allow her to help not only on that day, but for the rest of the harvest. This way she would have more than enough for her and Naomi. It's important to note that Boaz specifically commanded his workers to be kind to her and respect her as a foreign widow.

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[204] Ruth 1:5
[205] Ruth 1:16-17

In chapter 3, Naomi comes up with a plan for Ruth to visit Boaz after the day's work is over. She was told to lie down next to him and uncover his feet and tell him who she is. When he finally woke up, he was shocked and obviously had a few questions. Ruth asks him to be their family redeemer. A family redeemer is a person who marries a widow in their family so as to not leave them vulnerable and carry on the deceased husband's name. We read about this is in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Boaz agrees but says there is one relative who is related more closely to her, so he will talk to him the next day. They go back to sleep, and she leaves early the next morning and reports back to Naomi what will happen.

In the final and forth chapter, Boaz meets the man at the town gate who is slated to be the kinsman redeemer and gathers 10 witnesses. In their conversation, the slated kinsman redeemer discusses his interest in Elimelech's land but did not realize taking on this land would also mean he was to take on Elimelech's daughter-in-law, Ruth, as his wife. And when that is said to him, he fears for his own estate, and tells Boaz he can buy the land and in turn, marry Ruth. After the land transaction was complete, we read in verse 13 that Boaz married Ruth and shortly after she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Naomi was thrilled to be a grandmother and care for the little boy, who they named Obed. The book ends with a short genealogy that shows us Obed became the father of Jesse, who was the father of none other than King David. And Jesus was born of the line of King David.

5. <u>The church is called, like Boaz, to care for the vulnerable</u>

It's a wonderful story and one that speaks volumes to us living today. I want to go back and speak about Boaz in the second chapter and connect it to our topic today. Boaz was a man of faith. As a man of faith, he abided by certain rules God had laid out for the people of Israel. We read about these rules for living in Leviticus 19 - a chapter called the Holiness Code. It is spoken directly by God to the people of Israel. It was to be the standard for their personal conduct towards not only themselves, but everyone they met. The codes included regulation for clean eating, ritual sacrifice, sexual purity, appropriate conduct towards foreigners and workers. As I mentioned earlier, the story of Ruth took place during the time of the judges. The judges were there because many of the people no longer abided by these laws, but Boaz did. And it is because of his obedience, Ruth and Naomi were saved.

The reason Boaz allowed for gleaners to come onto his land was because of the command God gave the people in Leviticus 19:9 which says, "When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. **10** It is the same with your grape crop—do not strip every last bunch of grapes from the vines, and do not pick up the grapes that fall to the ground. Leave them for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I am the Lord your God." Boaz was caring for the poor and vulnerable through this small act of kindness which led him to meet Ruth.

Earlier I mentioned that traffickers and evil people alike prey on the weak and the vulnerable. Ruth and Naomi, with no husbands or sons, no food, and just the land (that they could not work alone) were the definition of vulnerable. Naomi knew this when she said to Ruth in verse 22, "Do as he says. Stay with his workers right through the whole harvest. You will be safe there, unlike in other fields."

I wonder, if a person of faith, a person like Boaz, had not come along – what would have happened to Ruth? What would have happened to Naomi? If they were desperate enough for food, would they have taken a job that promised good wages, but turned out to be brutal hours and little to no pay? Would Ruth be trapped into a life of prostitution because a man took advantage of her vulnerability and tough situation? Instead, because of a person of faith, her story ended as one of hope. She was not only saved but was able to leave a legacy. I wonder, is the church a place that is full of Boaz's today? Are each of us Christians living into our biblical command to care for the widow, the orphan, the vulnerable, the trafficked?

Boaz was a hero. In his dealing with other people, he was always sensitive to their needs. His words to his employees, relatives, and others were colored with kindness. He offered help openly, not grudgingly. When he discovered who Ruth was, he took several steps to help her even before he knew her because she had been faithful to his relative Naomi. When Naomi advised Ruth to request his protection, he was ready to marry her if the legal complication could be worked out.

Boaz not only did what was right; he also did it right away. Of course, he could not foresee all that his actions would accomplish. He could have not known that the child he would have by Ruth would be an ancestor to David and Jesus. He only met the challenge of taking the right action in the situation facing him. Each of us is faced with challenges each day. But the question for us is this, do we make the easy choice, or do we make the right one, even if it costs us more or is challenging?

6. Ways to be a Boaz (how to get involved in the fight)

I want to conclude our time this morning by offering a few concrete and tangible ways for us to join in the fight against human trafficking. Or to put it another way, ways to be a Boaz for people in need today.

1. Slavery Footprint: https://slaveryfootprint.org

In this exercise, you can see first-hand how the products you consume can be traced to known trafficking situations. You can see how vast human trafficking is and how your decisions continue to contribute to its occurrence. I encourage you to go home this afternoon and take this quiz. It is quite the reality check.

2. Educate yourself further! (Slide on the screen and brief description of each non-profit)
    a. https://www.ijm.org

b. https://www.a21.org
c. https://polarisproject.org
d. LOCAL - https://www.selahfreedom.com/about[206]

These organizations have unique roles in the fight against human trafficking. The more you know, the more you can share, and help those most in need. If you're a reader and would like a borrow a book – I have about two dozen books in my office I'd love to lend you.

3. Pick an organization and make it a part of your regular giving. If you're passionate about this, which I hope you are – find a group and support the fight with your wallet.

4. Pray every day. If all of this seems too overwhelming, if you're exhausted just listening today – I hear that, and I understand. When I first learned about this I was practically paralyzed in my spot. But as I learned more, I got madder and madder, and it fueled me and my family to be a part of fixing and talking about the problem rather than sitting back and letting someone else do it. But this all starts and ends with prayer. We can all do this.

My hope is that today opened your eyes to the horrors of trafficking that exists in our state and country. My prayer is that you will not forget about this. I, with love, hope this conversation spurs in you, holy discontentment. I hope you leave this place, measure you slavery footprint, read more, and then go tell all your friends about what you learned. Then invite them to join in fighting the good fight with you. In the coming months I will be sharing more ways for you as an individual and for us as a church on how to become more involved her in Bradenton. But for today, let us all take the first step to fight trafficking here, there, and everywhere. Amen.

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[206] When I preach this sermon (in January of 2022), I plan to have their clinical director come and speak at the conclusion of my sermon of how people can get involved here in Bradenton, Fl.

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Appendix B - Sermon to Use for a Freedom Sunday #2

This is a sermon I preached in January of 2023 at the church I serve. The sermon begins similar to the previous one, but it has a gripping video from International Justice Mission. About 15 minutes into the sermon, I transition into a 15-minute interview with the local anti-trafficking organization in my community to shed more light on what is happening in our community and how people can get involved. Feel free to use as much or as little of this sermon as you would like as you craft yours. Thank you for being a leader in this work by using your power and voice for good in our world.

I. Introduction: Trigger Warning

This morning church we're going to take time to think about what I believe is one of the worst types, and perhaps, one of the most despicable crimes on planet earth – modern-day slavery and other forms of human trafficking.

I feel it is important I give a warning to those of who perhaps have your children or grandchildren with you in worship this morning. I won't lie to you - this is going to be a challenging sermon to hear. There might be a few words or concepts that our younger members might not understand.

So, I leave the decision to you if you'd like to take them to Treasure Island for Children's Church, or if you'd prefer to have them stay – perhaps a follow up conversation at lunch after church would be wise. (Treasure island slide)

I want to begin by sharing a video created by International Justice Mission. They are an international anti-trafficking organization that is based in Washington D.C. but have offices all around the world. In just a few minutes you'll see how big, ugly, and present human trafficking is around the world – and right here at home.

II. Introductory Video: Hope in Action by IJM

https://www.ijm.org/stories?wchannelid=umc3dfgec0&wmediaid=uen7gv3d9z

"Proving that hope in action is the most powerful force in the whole world – and with it – justice is unstoppable." (screen)

III. What is Human Trafficking?

I want to take a few minutes to share with you some realties about human trafficking – especially if you aren't familiar with the topic. Then I'll share why this is a biblical issue. Then, I've invited a special guest to be present today and we'll have some time to hear from her.

According to several of the largest anti-human trafficking organizations that are currently fighting the good fight, there are estimated 40.3 million people in some form of trafficking today. There are more people enslaved today than any other time in history. It is a 150 billion dollar a year industry. It is comprised of 71% women and children, and 29% men. It happens in every country. 5.4 out of every 1,000 people in the world are enslaved. (Slides with this info)

The Department of Justice defines Human Trafficking as "a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations define human trafficking as:

> a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
> b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (22 U.S.C. § 7102(9))."

There are two primary forms of trafficking. The first is forced labor. Examples of forced labor include cutting down trees, fishing on boats, brick kilns, factory work, domestic labor, and soliciting. People are forced to work dangerous and grueling jobs for no pay.

The second is sex trafficking. The average age a child enters into sex trafficking is 14-16 years old.[207] This math equation might shock you, but let's say that a pimp, or a trafficker has 3 women or girls under his power. And the average girl is raped 15 or 20 times a night at $50 per time. That is $3,000 a night for the pimp. And let's say he works the victims 350 nights a year – that is $1,050,000.

Human trafficking is the second largest global criminal industry estimated at an annual $150 billion. Unlike drugs or illegal weapons, human beings are reusable and often abused over a period of time all for the profit their trafficker. Human Trafficking is real, and it's been around for a long time. And the only way it is ever going to end is if people like you and I step up and say – not anymore. Good things happen in this world when like-minded people come together and fight for what is right.

Again – "Proving that hope in action is the most powerful force in the whole world – and with it – justice is unstoppable."

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[207] All of the statistics and numbers are from the International Justice Mission, The A21 Campaign, and The Polaris Project.

IV. The God of Justice

Perhaps the most popular Bible verse about justice is Micah 6:8 which says, say it with me, *"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."* *(screen)*

Excellent. I want to share some others with you about how our God is a God of justice – and because of that – why I am convinced and convicted that God calls Christians to be involved in the fight against human trafficking.

Justice is rooted in God's character and creation. Here are just a few scriptures that prove this…

1. Deuteronomy 32:4 says: *"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright, and just is he."* (screen)

2. Psalms 11:7 says: "*The Lord is righteous, he loves justice*." (screen)

3. Isaiah 5:16 says: *"The Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice."* (screen)

Stories about God seeking justice are present in both the Old and New Testaments. For example…

As God's representatives, **judges** are called to acquit the innocent, condemn the guilty, and expose false accusations and bribery (2 Chronicles 19:5 – 7). They are not to distort justice by favoring either the poor or the rich (Exodus 23:3; Leviticus 19:15).

God also charges **kings** to act justly and instructs them to look after the weak and defenseless. The psalmist prays in Chapter 72, 1-2, *"Endow the king with your justice, O God . . . May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice."* (screen)

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people are exhorted to "learn to do right [and] seek justice" (Isaiah 1:17).

Similarly, the **prophets'** rail against injustice and insist that the right worship of God cannot exist without loving justice. Amos threatens judgment on "those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts" (Amos 5:12).

Zechariah exhorts God's people to "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor" (Zechariah 7:9 – 10).

Jesus echoes the Old Testament prophets when he calls out the Pharisees for concentrating on religious observance while neglecting "justice and the love of God" (Luke 11:42).

Justice holds a central place throughout Jesus' teaching and ministry. For Jesus, a lack of concern for the poor is not a minor oversight but reveals that a person is at odds with God. This is illustrated in the Parable of the sheep and goats where the true sheep are those who have a heart for the hungry, the stranger, the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned (Matthew 25:35 – 36).[208]

What I am trying to persuade you of this morning is that our God is a God of justice. God has a heart for justice – and God will not rest until there is justice for all of his children.

You now know that human trafficking is a global issue. You know the definition, some examples, and some statistics. You have heard biblical evidence of God's heart for justice and why human trafficking matters to God.

"Proving that hope in action is the most powerful force in the whole world – and with it – justice is unstoppable." (screen)

V. Introduce Selah & Show the Video

Now, I want to pivot and make it personal – and I want you to hear a story about someone in our community that experienced trafficking right here on our streets. This video was put together by Selah Freedom, a mission partner of our church, and we've been given special access to use it in worship this morning. This is called, "Ashley's Story."

VI. Interview with Brenda McGowan, from Selah Freedom

Robert: I imagine that this sermon has left several people with many more questions. We could talk for several more hours and still only begin to scratch the surface of all that is involved with human trafficking. With that being said, I have invited, and now want to introduce you to Brenda McGowan. Brenda serves as the Awareness and Development Manager at Selah Freedom, a local faith-based anti-trafficking non-profit. (slide) I asked her to be with us this morning to share a little bit more about the reality we face in Bradenton and SWFL. So, Brenda, welcome! Thank you for being here! Could you start by telling us a little bit more about Selah Freedom and the work you all do each day?

Brenda: Thank you… I'm so glad to be here… (whatever you'd like to say)…

Our mission at Selah Freedom is to end sex trafficking and bring freedom to the exploited, through 5 lifesaving programs: (slide with the 5 programs)

[208] https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/god-of-justice-verses-found-in-the-bible/

1. AWARENESS
2. PREVENTION
3. OUTREACH
4. RESIDENTIAL HOMES
5. CONSULTING – Exciting launch nationally!

Say 60-90 seconds about each

Robert: This morning we've heard some of the statistics about just how BIG of a problem this is and how widespread it is right here in Manatee and Sarasota counties – but also around the world. When we hear all of this it's tough to imagine not wanting to get involved and begin helping. So, let me ask you, how effective has your work been?

Brenda: We believe our work has been incredibly effective, especially with everything we are up against. You have to know it's more than stopping prostitution, it's about rehabilitation and helping to give victims the environment and tools to become thriving Survivors. During the past 10 years, we've discovered the ROOT CAUSE primarily stems from children being sexually abused at a very young age, often starting as young as 3 or 4 years old. As a result, they have learned there are "no boundaries", are shamed, belittled, their developing sense of self-worth is destroyed. This is an incredibly challenging reality to face.

We are proud to say, 87% of the SURVIVORS in our program, do not return to the "LIFE", they continue to pursue their educational and career goals, and learn how to have healthy relationships and families. (slide)

Robert: Wow! That is incredible. Can you share a story about a survivor you've worked with at Selah?

Brenda: There are so many inspirational stories to share, from families getting reunited with their children, a Survivor obtaining her driver's license for the first time, to seeing a Graduate publish her first book… but what touches me personally is the brave women who decide to GIVE BACK and join our team to help other victims, the way Ashely has. Not only are they brave, at risk of pouring salt into old wounds, but to open their hearts to help others is truly commendable. We have 6 Survivors on staff who are giving back and helping our programs. Visit our Website for more videos and stories.

Robert: My last question is this – what is the best way for people to connect with you moving forward if they want to learn more, want to begin supporting your work, or start giving with their time?

Brenda: Come talk to me after church! I'll be standing right down here and I'm eager to connect with you. Otherwise please check out our website, I have cards and literature available here with me, and I know Pastor Robert will have plenty of information and can connect you as well.

Robert: Closing words of thanks and the congregation claps to thank you!

Robert to then wrap up the sermon and introduce final song.

"Proving that hope in action is the powerful force in the whole world – and with it – justice is unstoppable." (screen)

Appendix C – Additional Prayers for Personal or Congregational Use

1. ***This prayer is authored by Rev. Mike Luzinski. Mike serves at the Senior Pastor at Spring of Life United Methodist Church is Lake Nona, Florida.***

Weeping God, we know you hear the cries of the oppressed. You heard the cries of your people in slavery in Egypt and you hear the cries of people in bondage today. Lord, we lament for people who pursue their own pleasure at a terrible cost to others. Lord, we lament when it feels like leaders stand off to the side doing little to change the broken system. May our tears water the seeds of the coming redemption. By the power of the Holy Spirit, bring freedom to those who are trapped in the cycle of violence. By the power of the Holy Spirit, work through brave leaders, the church, and caring neighbors to free all who are trapped in the sin of human trafficking. Amen.

2. ***This prayer is authored by Rev. Madeline Luzinski. Madeline serves at the Chaplain at the Florida United Methodist Children's Home in Enterprise, Florida.***

God who sees me, once You spoke to Hagar, a woman whose body was used without her consent in the desert. You spoke to Hagar, and she named You, El Roi, the God who sees. God, there are so many in this world who need to be seen and heard. In this moment we especially call to mind those who have experienced and are experiencing trafficking of their bodies, minds, and spirits. We pray that You would see them as You saw Hagar. We pray for Your intercession on their behalf. By Your Spirit speak soothing words of hope and peace. Move in their midst to orchestrate freedom and restoration in body, mind, and spirit. God, we also acknowledge that being part of your body is not a passive role. Inspire us to act in support of our neighbors who have been trafficked

through education, policies, programs, and prayer. Come and see, Lord, Come and see. Amen.

3. *This prayer is authored by Rev. Iván Gonzalez. Iván serves as the Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Leadership and Partnerships Senior Specialist for the General Commission on Race and Religion.*

Almighty God and faithful companion, we ask that you continue to be a healing and grounding force to those who have experienced or are experiencing the malicious violence of human trafficking. God, we ask that you be light amid darkness, peace amid the turmoil of life, and a balm amid our pain. Give us courage Lord to name evil plainly, to love without growing weary, and wisdom on when to speak and when to listen. Pour your spirit over us that we can be a wellspring of grace and compassion among those who have been trafficked. May our churches be hospitals and may our presence bring hope. In your name we pray, amen.

4. *This prayer is authored by Rev. John and Rev. Emily Shughart. John and Emily serve as co-pastors at Community of Faith United Methodist Church in Davenport, Florida.*

O God of Liberation, Your spirit anoints each of us to do the work of setting captives free. Open our minds to know that this is not purely a spiritual endeavor. Open our eyes to see the real ways that slavery still exists all around us in the form of human trafficking, forced labor, and more. Open our hearts and strengthen us to be your agents of liberation in the world, so that all your children might be delivered from bondage and experience freedom. Through your son Jesus Christ who frees us all. Amen.

5. ***This prayer is authored by Rev. David and Rev. Meghan Killingsworth. David and Meghan serve as co-pastors at First United Methodist Church of Sanford, Florida.***

El Roi, you are the God who sees us. You saw Hagar, a victim of sexual violence and exploitation, and you were with her when she was the most vulnerable and alone. God, we ask that you would be close to those who are victims of trafficking. Those who are exploited, those who are abused, those who have lost hope. Lord, hear their cries. Remind them that they are not alone. God give us the ability to see as you see. Give us the courage to not turn a blind eye to the realities of trafficking that are in our communities, in our towns, in our midst. Allow us to see the injustices and grant us the audacity to respond. Help us not simply to detect abuse, but to be those who denounce it. Move us not only see to exploitation, but to stop it. Let us not just observe injustice, let us oppose it. Amen.

6. ***This prayer is authored by Rev. Will Wold. Will serves as the Senior Pastor at First United Methodist Church of St. Augustine, Florida.***

God, you are the great forgiver and healer of all people. We are grateful that when we turn away and our love fails, you remain steadfast. In this time, we pray specifically for those who have caused harm and violence by trafficking others. They have wandered from the path of creating harmony and peace within the world. They have caused individuals severe emotional and physical pain. They have harmed family systems that will forever be scarred. They have harmed themselves by viewing others as objects instead of people. And yet, Almighty One, you do not abandon them or hate them, but you love them and seek their healing. So, we pray, that you would bring about healing

and care for those who cause violence through trafficking. Might they find transformation and hope thorough your Spirit. Might they return to the path of creating a more just world. We pray that you would break our stone hearts to be a conduit of your restorative work within those who are or have been oppressive. Might you bring all of us into your healing work within those who have caused harm. We pray all of this through your son's redemptive name, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

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Biography

Rev. Robert S. Bledsoe is a Florida native who was born and raised in Ocala, Florida. He then attended Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida from 2010 to 2014 where he obtained a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. This degree has helped him lead within the local church in a variety of ways. While attending Florida Southern, he was inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa, the Order of Omega, and he received recognition for his campus involvement in many areas including campus ministries, student government, Greek life, and more. He then attended Duke Divinity School as a Divinity Fellow for his Master of Divinity degree from 2014 to 2017. His ministry career began as an Associate Pastor at Cypress Lake United Methodist Church in Fort Myers, Florida. Robert was ordained an Elder in Full Connection in The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church in September 2020 by Bishop Ken Carter. He then returned to Duke Divinity School in 2021 to pursue his Doctor of Ministry degree which he completed in December of 2023. Robert currently serves as the Senior Pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church in Bradenton, Florida. Trinity is a multi-generational, missionally focused, vital, and thriving church where people are meeting Jesus and growing in their faith every day. His wife of 8 years is Jessica Bledsoe. She is a licensed clinical social worker and operates her own mental health counseling business. They have a 3-year-old son, Hardin, a baby on the way, and a puppy named George. Thanks for reading this thesis and may God bless you and your ministry.

Questions? Ideas? Would love to connect with you! Best way is:

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