

Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

September 20, 2016

This Sunday has been designated by the International Justice Mission (IJM) as “Freedom Sunday,” and we will observe it at CBF. We will, in fact, observe it in this week’s *Laptop*, next week’s *Laptop*, and the next two Wednesday evenings . . . in addition to this Sunday morning.

The subject is hardly edifying, but it is electrifying. Our subject is slavery. Modern-Day Slavery. Right here. Right now. All over the US of A, and unfortunately, all over our world.

More people are in slavery today than at any time in the history of the world. That’s the bad news; but there’s good news, too.

The Good News is that we just may be the first generation in the history of the world who will be able to completely eradicate slavery from this planet. The cracks are already in the walls, but much more needs to be done, *and we can help.*

For starters, I invite you to read and ponder the infographics that follow in this *Laptop*. Then, on the next two Wednesday nights, we’ll watch the documentary, *In Plain Sight*, which talks both about the problem of sex trafficking in America and about how Christians from coast to coast—including here in Baltimore—are responding to the need.

On Sunday morning, we’ll see a couple of short films that highlight the work IJM is doing around the world; and next week’s *Laptop* will talk, not about “supply,” but about “demand.”



These will not be pleasant conversations, but they will potentially be world-changing ones. Don’t miss them.

Dave

IT'S NOT JUST AN "INTERNATIONAL" ISSUE.

LEARN MORE

You may have heard the term "sex trafficking" and thought that it was just an international issue. While the term trafficking may conjure images of desperate illegal immigrants being forced into prostitution by human smugglers, **over 80 percent of victims in 2011 confirmed sex trafficking cases in this country were American citizens.** Or, maybe, you heard about the recent case in Ohio where three girls were kidnapped and kept as sex slaves... and you thought it was just one guy with a serious problem.

Think again. It's happening in plain sight, and you probably don't even realize it.



WOMEN & GIRLS

80% of sex trafficking victims are women and girls and up to 50% are minors. (U.S. State Department)



ABUSED AS A CHILD

90% of prostituted women have been physically abused as children (Encyclopedia of Women and Gender).



LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME

70% of sex trafficking is linked to organized crime (Real Stories: Legal Efforts to Curb Sex Trafficking).

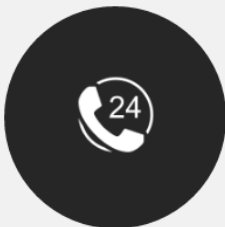


ATTEMPT SUICIDE

75% of prostituted women have attempted suicide (Prostitution: Factsheet on Human Rights Violations).

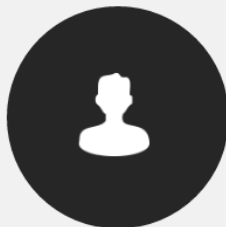
WHERE IT'S HAPPENING

Did you know that women and children are being forced, frauded, and coerced into what amounts to sexual slavery?



ESCORT SERVICES

Whether a "date" is acquired on Craigslist.com or Backpage.com or by calling a number on a newspaper ad, escort services are nothing more than thinly-veiled prostitution.



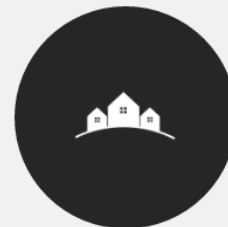
MESSAGE PARLORS

There are over 4,000 brothels disguised as fake massage businesses in the United States according to online lists meticulously updated by "johns" on a daily basis.



TRUCK STOPS

Often insulated from local communities, truck stops and welcome centers are convenient places for transient customers to purchase sex with minimal concerns of detection.



STREETS, MOTELS, RESIDENTIAL

While you may think of a prostitute walking down the street, it's more likely that she's living and working out of a motel or local residence and setting up "dates" via phone.



THE PROCESS OF SEX TRAFFICKING

1. VULNERABLE PERSON

2. SEX TRAFFICKER

3. FALSE LOVE

4. GROOMING

5. PROSTITUTING

Sex trafficking has been described as the "exploitation of the vulnerable."

This vulnerable person is usually a woman or child who is in a situation where their weakness can be taken advantage of. In the case of a child, physical or sexual abuse often starts in their home at the hands of a relative, foster parent, or close family friend – causing them to assume that abuse is a normal way of life. Without a sense of love or safety, the child may run away from home and find themselves on the street without food or shelter. Or, they may come into contact with someone who makes them initially feel special or wanted.

The situation isn't much different in the case of an adult...a past that includes abuse, a need for love, and susceptible to the false promises of a trafficker.

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As hard as it may be to accept, many traffickers themselves are most likely victims of broken families and abuse. They were born into neighborhoods that did not support young men's dreams outside of abusing women and/or drugs. The perpetrators are just as broken as the victims. Perhaps, their fathers victimized women, and they are following in his footsteps. Or, more likely, they don't even know their father, and they weren't taught what it means to be a loving husband themselves.

Beyond a need for power and control, a sex trafficker's primary motive for prostituting women is money.

Polaris Project, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit working with victims of human trafficking recently conducted an informal analysis of a pimp's wages, based on direct client accounts. One teenage girl was forced to meet quotas of \$500/night, 7 days a week and gave the money to her trafficker each night. This particular pimp also controlled three other women. Based on these numbers, Polaris Project estimates that the pimp made \$632,000 in one year from four young women and girls.

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Sex traffickers manipulate their victims with an initial period of false love and affection in order to attain long-term mind-control. This often includes:

- Warmth, gifts, and compliments.
- Elaborate promises of a better life, fast money, and future luxuries.
- Physical and sexual intimacy.

Traffickers engage in constant recruiting to entice women and children into their web of control. Common recruiting locations include junior high and high schools, courtrooms, hallways of court buildings, foster homes, bus stations, group homes, homeless shelters, halfway houses, restaurants and bars, and parks and playgrounds/

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After the trafficker has gained a woman or child's trust and love, he or she starts the "grooming" process. Traffickers worldwide practice this breaking-down process to achieve complete control over someone through a combination of physical, mental, and emotional means.

This process includes beatings, gang rape, confinement, torture, emotional abuse and insults, renaming and creating new identities, document confiscation, burning personal items, forced sexual education and pornography, and isolation.

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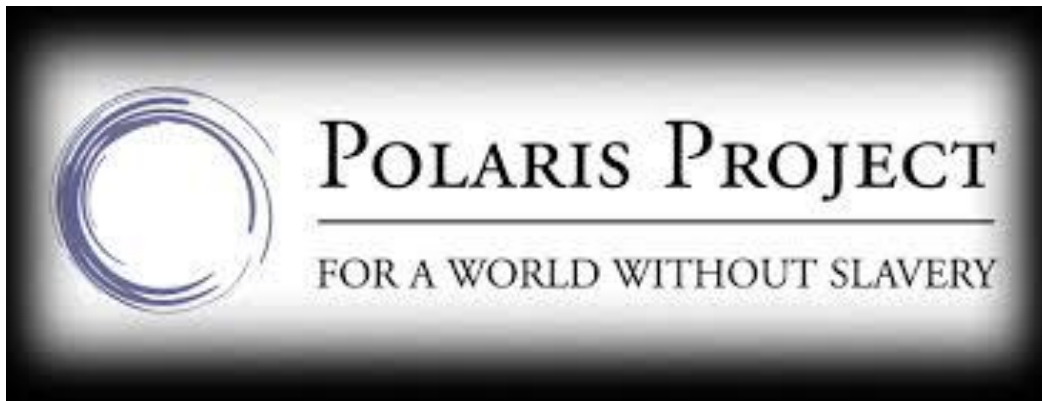
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Once a woman or child has been groomed, they become a commodity for sale or trade. They are trafficked, moved from city to city for the financial gain of those who use, abuse, and control them. **This is modern-day slavery.**

Offenders are no longer confined to parading their victims on city streets. Today, a customer (or "john") can shop online for a child from the privacy of home or a hotel room. Online classified advertising services have made it possible for pimps and operators to offer children and adolescents to prospective customers with little or no risk.

It is widely-known and well-documented that pimps establish nightly monetary quotas that the women and girls under their control must make in order to end each night of commercial sex. These quotas typically fall in the range of \$500 - \$1,000 each night. Through whatever means necessary (including forced theft), the woman or child must reach these quotas each night to be allowed to eat or sleep. If they not make enough money, they will be forced back out into her venue of commercial sex until they reach their quota. Quotas are strictly enforced, and the punishment for failing to meet a quota is severe physical retaliation from the pimp or other torture methods. It is also essential to note that in pimp-controlled situations, the women and girls keep zero of this money and turn over 100 percent of the profits to the pimp.



An Ongoing Search for Victims and the Relentless Pursuit of Wealth and Power

Pimps are known to engage in constant recruiting to attempt to entice women and children into their web of control. Common recruiting locations include:

- Junior high and high schools
- Courtrooms
- Hallways of court buildings
- Foster homes
- Bus stations
- Group homes
- Homeless shelters
- Halfway houses
- Restaurants and bars
- Parks and playgrounds

“Seasoning” Women and Girls to be Ready for Commercial Sex with Strangers

The process of “breaking-down” a girl from healthy adolescent sexual boundaries to commercial sex with strangers is often referred to as “grooming” or “seasoning.” It is a systematic process that has been documented and replicated by pimps nationwide. In essence, this process aims to achieve complete control over someone’s identity or individuality using a combination of physical, mental, and emotional means. In the trafficking paradigm, this process involves force, fraud, and coercion, as elaborated below. Seasoning often involves:

- Beating/Slapping/Whipping – With hands, fists, and kicking, as well as with objects such as bats, tools, chains, belts, hangers, canes, and cords
- Burning – Of personal items and items of meaning to foster hopelessness and demoralization or directly burning women and girls using cigarette/cigar butts
- Sexual assault – Rape or gang rape
- Confinement – Using torture practices such as confinement to lock women and girls in closets, trunks of cars, or rooms for indeterminate amounts of time.
- Other torture techniques – Such as deprivation of food or water or various forms of bondage such as chaining individuals to items or tying them up.
- Emotional abuse – Direct verbal insults, name-calling, threats, mind control, brainwashing, cognitive re-programming
- Re-naming – Offering “nicknames” both for endearment and to erase former identity
- Creating dependencies – By instructing how to walk, how to talk, what to wear, when to eat, when to sleep, and where to sleep.
- Removal from familiarity and support structures – By transporting a woman or minor to a new location where she knows no one
- Document confiscation – Of identification documents (ID, birth certificate, SS number)
- Forced sexual education – Inducement of viewing pornography to learn to have sex

WHY DON'T THEY SEEK HELP?

According to Polaris Project, the women and children under a pimp's control will often not self-identify as victims of sex trafficking or seek help on their own. The following is a list of common reasons why victims of domestic sex trafficking cannot or will not leave their exploitative situations:



Captivity/Confinement

- Locked indoors, locked in rooms, or locked in closets.
- Interactions are monitored or controlled by the sex trafficker (i.e., pimp).



Use of Violence

- Severe physical retaliation (beatings, rapes, sexual assault).
- Threats against loved ones.



Shame

- Humiliated by the activities they have been forced to perform.
- Brainwashed by the pimp to blame themselves.



Dependency/Loyalty

- Relying on the pimp after years of control.
- May have a debt to the pimp that they feel they need to pay off.
- Stockholm syndrome similar to Battered Women's Syndrome.



Isolation

- Unfamiliar with surroundings due to frequent movement.
- No personal ID or documentation which is often confiscated by the pimp.



Distrust

- Brainwashed to fear law enforcement by the pimp or learned distrust of law enforcement due to direct negative experiences.
- Have been told lies or deceitful information



Hopelessness

- Resigned to the "fact" that they'll never get out of their situation.
- Feelings of no self-worth, disassociation, giving up, and apathy.
- May not understand social service infrastructure or how and where to access help.

