

Slavery

International Justice Series

Isn't the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and to not ignore your own flesh and blood? Then your light will appear like the dawn, and your recovery will come quickly. Your righteousness will go before you, and the LORD's glory will be your rear guard. At that time, when you call, the LORD will answer; when you cry out, He will say: Here I am. If you get rid of the yoke from those around you, the finger-pointing and malicious speaking,
- Isaiah 58:6-9 HCSB

Image of prostitute



The International Labor Office (ILO) estimates that there are over 12 million people trapped in forced labor around the world, one fifth (2.5 million) of them are victims of human trafficking.

This illicit industry generates as much as \$32 billion in revenue each year. Let's bluntly spell out the economic implications of sex slavery:

An ounce of cocaine, wholesale, costs \$1,200, but you can only sell it once.

The cost of a woman or a child ranges between \$50 and \$1,000, but you can sell them each day, every day, over and over and over again.

Thus, the markup in human trafficking is immeasurable. Over the past decade, trafficking in human beings has reached epidemic proportions. No country is immune. The search for work abroad has been fuelled by economic disparity, high unemployment and the disruption of traditional livelihoods. Traffickers face few risks and can earn huge profits by taking advantage of large numbers of potential immigrants.

Image of traffickers



Trafficking in human beings is a crime in which victims are moved from poor environments to more affluent ones, with the profits flowing in the opposite direction, a pattern often repeated at the domestic, regional and global levels.

It is believed to be growing fastest in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In Asia, girls from villages in Nepal and Bangladesh – the majority of whom are under 18 – are sold to brothels in India for \$1000. Trafficked women from Thailand and the Philippines are increasingly being joined by women from other countries in Southeast Asia. Europol estimates that the industry is now worth several billion dollars a year.

Image of child



Trafficking in human beings is not confined to the sex industry. Children are trafficked to work in sweatshops as bonded labor and men work illegally in the "three D-jobs" – dirty, difficult and dangerous.

Image of US slavery chart



A recent CIA report estimated that between 45,000 to 50,000 women and children are brought to the United States every year under false pretenses and are forced to work as prostitutes, abused laborers or servants.

Image of African child



UNICEF estimates that more than 200,000 children are enslaved by cross-border smuggling in West and Central Africa. The children are often placed in indentured servitude by unsuspecting parents who believe their children are going to be looked after, learn a trade or be educated.

Image of UN peacekeeper



In many cases, trafficking patterns are also related to conflict situations as combatants, or as we have seen lately in the news, even the peacekeepers themselves, create a market for the services of victims and the effects of conflict erode the capacity of law enforcement and other authorities to combat the problem.

Additionally, the spread of HIV/AIDS among victims trafficked into prostitution makes victim support and repatriation a public health issue.

Image of child picking through garbage



We must deal with the underlying issue of poverty. Trafficking is fostered, in part, by social and economic disparities that create a supply of victims seeking to migrate and a demand for sexual and other services that provide the economic impetus for trafficking. Deterrence and criminal punishments are important elements, but addressing the underlying conditions which drive both supply and demand are also necessary.

We must craft effective laws, publicize them and then enforce them. Another important preventive measure is public information to mobilize support for effective laws, raise the awareness of key law enforcement and other officials, and to make the socially marginalized groups from whom victims are often recruited more aware of the reality of trafficking and less likely to be deceived when approached by traffickers.

The solution is going to have to be cross-cultural and multinational in its nature.

Trafficking is not a localized problem. The international crime of trafficking is susceptible to a complex range of influencing factors, which include the economies of supply countries and their neighbors, government anti-drugs initiatives affecting agricultural communities, sexual demand for particular ethnic types, the legal status of communities, restrictive immigration policies, official corruption and cultural stereotypes.

Anti-trafficking initiatives with a single country focus, which do not take a broader regional or international perspective, are therefore unlikely to succeed. In commenting on the effects of a narrow geopolitical focus, Phil Marshall, Programme Manager of UNIAP, coined the phrase "the 'push-down, pop-up' phenomena",

Trafficking conferences, conventions and government statements of goodwill are not enough. It is time we stopped simply presenting horror stories of individual women, and looked at the root causes. It is time we stopped feeling good about feeling bad.

Both the Old and the New Covenants condemn the practice of kidnapping. In fact, it's a capital offense in the Old not only to steal a human but to even be in the possession of a kidnapped person.

- Exodus 21:16 HCSB "Whoever kidnaps a person must be put to death, whether he sells him or the person is found in his possession.

The New Covenant continues this view stating that this wickedness is lawless, rebellious and against sound teaching.

- 1 Timothy 1:9-11 HCSB We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 for the sexually immoral and homosexuals, for kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching 11 based on the glorious gospel of the blessed God that was entrusted to me.

The practice of human trafficking is directly against the purpose and vision of our Master.

- Luke 4:18 HCSB The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed,

Traffickers in human lives will face severe punishment upon the Lord's return.

- Matthew 18:6-7 HCSB "But whoever causes the downfall of one of these little ones who believe in Me--it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea! 7 Woe to the world because of offenses. For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes.

Many people try to use the book of Philemon as an example of the Scripture's support for slavery but in this they demonstrate an ignorance of the historical context. Onesimus was not some kidnapped slave being returned to his owner. Onesimus was Philemon's blood brother.

- Philemon 1:15-16 HCSB For perhaps this is why he was separated from you for a brief time, so that you might get him back permanently, 16 no longer as a slave, but more than a slave--as a dearly loved brother. This is especially so to me, but even more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

The Old Covenant had a system of indentured servitude. When people incurred a debt they could not pay, rather than go bankrupt as they do today, they would become the indentured servants of their creditors. This same practice was routinely used in the United States by those who could not pay their passage to the States. They would often perform six years of indenture to pay off their debt. We continue this practice today. Those who cannot afford to pay for college will have their debts paid by the military with the agreement of a set number of years of service in return. This is not slavery in the same sense as the abhorrent "ownership" of humans during the Civil War days or the buying and selling of lives that we have discussed today. This is why we see passages such as:

- Proverbs 22:7 HCSB The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is a slave to the lender.

In view of the abuse and the certainty of an early death either directly at the hands of their abusers or as a result of the sexually transmitted diseases that slaves are infected with, God's warning in Proverbs 24 is particularly pertinent. Those who struggle against slavery are saving lives.

- Proverbs 24:10-12 HCSB If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited. 11 Rescue those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter. 12 If you say, "But we didn't know about this," won't He who weighs hearts consider it? Won't He who protects your life know? Won't He repay a person according to his work?

God expects His children to actively fight human trafficking.

- Isaiah 58:6 HCSB Isn't the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke?

Image of beaten woman



What can you do about human trafficking?

1. Make a donation to an anti-trafficking organization to help fund a rescue of a victim of trafficking.
2. Educate yourself.
 - a. Study passages about justice and oppression and align yourself with God on the matter.
 - b. Watch the film Born into Brothels to better understand the impact of trafficking.
3. Pray
 - a. Pray for both the victims and the perpetrators.
 - b. Pray for organizations like IJM;
 - i. that they will receive financial help to continue their difficult task;
 - ii. that they would be wise as serpents in their approach
 - iii. and as innocent hearted as doves in their motivations.
4. Make human trafficking and your objection to it a topic of conversation. Use whatever influence you have to raise awareness for the issue.
5. Make God's expectation of the restoration of justice an integral part of your witness.
6. Be prepared to go. Consider the possibility of God's call into this area of ministry.
 - a. Donate your services to an anti-trafficking organization.
 - b. Consider becoming an advocate for slaves. If this interests you read "Preparing for a Career in Human Rights" by Gary Haugen at www.ijm.org.
7. Tell your elected officials that human trafficking is a problem that cannot be ignored and ask them to take action on the political level to stop this inhumane practice.