

Give voice to the voiceless – Sexual Exploitation

Soul Food Day 1

Scripture

Luke 7:36-50 (NIV)

Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman

³⁶ When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

⁴¹ "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,^[a] and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

⁴³ Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Bad Girls of the Bible: The Sinful Woman

We don't know her name, her age, or her history. We know only that she was bad for a season. To be specific, she sold her body for money. Because her sinful lifestyle was common knowledge, people whispered about her, eyed her with disdain, avoided her company.

Except Jesus. He welcomed her touch. He met her gaze. He called her forgiven. Here's the story: Simon, a Pharisee, invited Jesus to a large public dinner. In the style of the day, the Lord reclined at a low table, propping himself up on his left elbow, eating with his right hand. His body was stretched out, his feet exposed. Aha.

Then "a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town" (Luke 7:37) showed up at Simon's house. Make no mistake, she was "an especially wicked sinner" (AMP), "an immoral woman" (NLT). Her sins weren't listed in detail because they didn't need to be. The world's oldest profession hardly requires a job description.

She came alone, bearing a small alabaster vial of perfume. Did she intend to give the Lord this “flask of ointment” (AMP), this “jar of fragrant oil” (HCSB)? Or did she mean simply to anoint his head, a common gesture of respect? Whatever her plans, they flew out the window the moment she saw him.*Jesus*.

Speechless, she drew closer, then “stood behind him at his feet weeping” (Luke 7:38). Little wonder. Tears often spring to my eyes when I sense the Lord’s presence. Tears of sorrow for my sins. Tears of gratitude for his goodness. Perhaps she felt the same. Perhaps you’ve been there as well. She cried so hard that “her tears began to wet his feet” (Luke 7:38 CJB). You know she must have been mortified. But she couldn’t stop her tears—not when her heart was filled to overflowing. She sank to her knees, then bowed her head so low it touched the ground.

Jesus didn’t pull away, didn’t scold her, didn’t make her feel foolish. No, he gladly received the baptism of her tears, recognizing this heartfelt expression for what it was—worship, pure and holy. She could have used her sleeves to dry his tear-drenched feet. Instead, “she wiped them with the hair of her head” (NKJV). Far more personal, more humble, more sacrificial. Our Bad Girl held nothing back now. She pressed her lips to his feet, “kissing them many times” (NCV). Not just once in shy affection, but “over and over again” (GW) with an abundance born of passion. It was customary to kiss a man’s hand or cheek or the hem of his garment. But this woman kissed his dirt-covered, stone-bruised feet.

Oh my. And she wasn’t finished yet. Then she reached for her alabaster box, “and poured perfume” (Luke 7:38) on his feet—the same perfume she wore to advertise her services. So much for slipping under the radar at Simon’s gathering. When [Mary of Bethany](#) anointed Jesus on a later occasion, “the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:3). This anointing, though, was done in a different time and place, and performed by a very different woman. Not Mary of Bethany, and certainly not [Mary Magdalene](#), who has yet to be introduced in Luke’s gospel and who was never called a prostitute anywhere in Scripture.

But this woman? Undeniably bad. Simon the Pharisee had seen enough. He said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner” (Luke 7:39). He was not only disgusted with this “social outcast, devoted to sin” (AMP), he was also unimpressed with Jesus. *If he were a prophet...* Clearly Simon was not convinced.

Jesus knew the man’s thoughts, and so responded with a story about two men in debt to a moneylender. One owed a lot, one owed a little. Neither man could afford to pay back his loan, so the moneylender canceled their debts and “freely forgave them both” (Luke 7:42 AMP).

Don’t you love the Lord’s teaching style? *Enter into their story*, he beckons. *Learn from their example*. When Jesus asked Simon, “Which of them will love him more?” (Luke 7:42), the Pharisee had no choice but to confess, “I suppose the one he forgave more” (Luke 7:43 HCSB). Too right, Simon. The Lord affirmed the man’s answer, then turned toward our repentant Bad Girl, even as he continued speaking to Simon. This is my favorite part.

“Do you see this woman?” (Luke 7:44) Simon saw a prostitute, period. He didn’t see her as a person, nor had he “noticed” (CEV) her acts of worship for what they were. But Jesus missed nothing. *He saw her*. He saw her sordid past, her humble present, and her glorious future. He quickly described all the ways she’d honored him—unlike Simon—then finished with this startling announcement: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven” (Luke 7:47 ASV). *All* her sins? *All* are forgiven? Yes. Why? “Because she loves much” (Luke 7:47 NIV).

We’ve called her silent adulation *worship*. What she really poured all over his feet was *love*. Her tears, her hair, her kisses, her perfume. Love, love, love, love. In comparison, Jesus told Simon, “He who is forgiven little, loves little” (ESV). In truth, no one should fall into that category, because we’ve all been forgiven of a great many sins. All of us should be reduced to tears of gratitude. All of us should be on our faces before him. Our Former Bad Girl understood that, which is why Jesus told her straight out, “Your sins are forgiven” (Luke 7:48). Not *will* be, not *might* be. *Are*.

The other guests began murmuring among themselves, as Jesus offered the woman a final word of assurance: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50). Peace? Yes, please. What woman doesn't need more of that in her life?

She did not speak her faith—no verbal confession, no sinner's prayer was recorded here—but she certainly demonstrated her love for a God who forgives completely. May we go and do the same.

This week, this day, this hour.

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Now talk to Jesus.

Adapted from: <https://www.lizcurtishiggs.com/bad-girls-of-the-bible-the-sinful-woman/>

Soul Food Day 2

Scripture:

Hebrews 11:31-40 (NIV)

³¹ By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

³² And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. ³⁵ Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. ³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were put to death by stoning;^[E] they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— ³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Rahab the Survivor

One of the most important tools that advocates have up their sleeves is storytelling. Stories have the ability to inform, inspire, and incite action. Whenever I speak or write about human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, I rely on stories that try to capture all three of these elements:

- Do the stories I share accurately inform people of the realities of human trafficking across the world and in their own communities? Or do the stories perpetuate sensationalized myths for the purpose of “shock factor”?
- Do the stories I share inspire people and leave them hopeful? Or do the stories immobilize people, leave them in a state of despair, or paralyze them with hopelessness?
- Do the stories I share incite an actionable next step, something tangible that someone across ages and abilities can do to make a difference?

I'm always wrestling with the ethical questions around storytelling. Whose story am I sharing? How is someone's confidentiality and privacy being protected when I share a story? Who is benefiting from this story being told?

In [an article about the ethics of storytelling](#) and the storytelling phenomenon of “[Humans of New York](#)”, Emily Jenab asks, “Is there ever truly an ethical way of presenting someone’s suffering?” She raises some tough questions that I often ponder around storytelling. This Advent season, I introduced the concept of the Jesse Tree to my five-year-old daughter. We’ve been reading stories about people in Jesus’s lineage and are about to learn about Rahab.

My daughter does not know a lot about the work I do with [Restorations Second Stage Homes](#), a charity in southern Ontario working to provide safe, stable, and supportive housing for survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. She does know that I am friends with a lot of women (some of whom she has met) and that I “help” women who have been hurt. The stories I share with her are limited and sensitive to her five-year-old mind and heart. I am excited to share with her about Rahab.

I am quite familiar with the story of Rahab, but I saw her with fresh eyes this week. A lot of stories shared about commercial sexual exploitation tend to dwell on the victimhood of the exploited. And while I think it’s important to share stories that help people truly understand the serious harms, hurts, and traumas of commercial sexual exploitation, our storytelling can’t stop there.

When I talk to people about commercial sexual exploitation, I get the sense that they tend to think of victims as meek, mild, damaged individuals in need of “rescuing” and “saving.” I love stories like Rahab’s, ones that are multifaceted, nuanced, and complex. Stories that reveal injustices and also magnify resilience and strength. These stories look more like the women I work with than the victim stories tend to.

Most of the Advent stories I’ve read about Rahab go something like this: “Rahab was a prostitute! Rahab was a liar! A harlot! But even someone as shameful and bad as Rahab is in Jesus’s lineage.” And I understand this type of storytelling: we are meant to recognize that despite our own sinfulness, despite the wrongs we do, we are redeemable and we are loved by God. Other articles I read about the women listed in the lineage of Jesus included words like *sordid* and *notorious*.

Considering it as an Advent resource for my family, I had been perusing Ann Voskamp’s *Unwrapping the Greatest Gift: A Family Celebration of Christmas* earlier this month. The “thoughts to discuss” section for the day of Rahab’s story was the following: “Have you ever seen God turn someone’s life completely around, so that person went from choosing a bad path to following Jesus? How is Jesus doing just that miraculous thing in your life?”

Beyond the problematic insinuation that Rahab’s lifestyle was a “choice” (because often [prostitution is a path travelled because of lack of choices](#)), can we look beyond Rahab as the sinning prostitute or even as the prostituted victim? Can we tell the story of Rahab the Survivor?

Today I am choosing to see the resilience of Rahab the Survivor. She was proactive and went to the spies with a plan (see Joshua 2:8, 15-16). Rahab was confident and bold as she proclaimed what she knew

(Joshua 2:9-11). She advocated not just for herself, but for her family (Joshua 2:12-13). She was faithful to what God was doing in her life. She is Rahab the strong. Rahab the leader.

Storytelling is essential to advocacy. Sally Vis, a missionary colleague whose work includes sharing stories about Israel and Palestine, explained the concept of advocacy to me as “walking alongside others whose voices are not typically heard and using your voice to amplify theirs.” This has informed the way I share stories. They are not *my* stories, but I can amplify them.

Proverbs 31:8-9 says, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Years ago, I had a blog where I first started channeling my writing about justice. At the time I picked what I thought was the perfect name for the work I was trying to do, yet now I find my ideas and practices around advocacy and storytelling have changed. My blog was called “Speaking for Others.” And while I recognize that a large part of my work is sharing stories for those who may not physically be able to – children, those who have not yet found a way out of commercial sexual exploitation, those who do not wish to be in the spotlight or desire to maintain some sort of privacy – I don’t see my work as speaking *for* others any more. As I wrote once on Restorations’ website, it’s our job to be microphones, to *amplify* needs and voices.

I commit to amplifying more stories and voices of those like Rahab. Not Rahab the sinner or the victim, but Rahab the strong, brave, resilient, and mighty Survivor.

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Now talk to Jesus.

Adapted from: <http://dojustice.crcna.org/article/rahab-survivor>

Soul Food Day 3

Scripture

Luke 7:36-50 (NIV)

Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman

³⁶ When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

⁴¹ “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,^[c] and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

⁴³ Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

The Living Word

The Bible is a book of knowledge but it is also a living word. This means that the Bible not only enriches our minds, but it also penetrates our hearts (see Hebrews 4:12). Sometimes when we focus so much on what the Bible says we sometimes miss what God is trying to say to us right now. That is why sometimes we just need to carve our space, often in silence, to mediate on scripture. That is what we will do today: mediate and rest in scripture. We will be there to guide you. Read the scripture slowly and then sit in still silence for one-minute resting in God. We will give you questions you can ask to God, however, allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart what he wants in this time. Let's pray, *Father God guide us as we meet You in Your Word.*

Who do you most relate to in the story? Picture yourself there. What do you think God is trying to tell you?

Read Luke 7:36-50

Listen in silence for 1 minute

Read Luke 7:36-50

Is there is certain group of people to whom you have Simon's attitude. Bring your heart to God.

Listen in silence for 1 minute

Read Luke 7:36-50

How much have you been forgiven by Jesus? How much do you love Jesus?

Listen in silence for 1 minute

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Now thank God for your time with him.

Soul Food Day 4

Scripture

Matthew 1:1-6; 16-17 (NIV)

¹ This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac,

Isaac the father of Jacob,

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,

Perez the father of Hezron,

Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab,

Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife...

¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Is She My Sister

In September 2016, the Government of Canada launched a 'National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls', after decades of advocacy from Indigenous groups. Its mission is defined by three goals: finding the truth; honouring the truth; and giving life to the truth as a path to healing. These goals parallel the power of Biblical stories that reveal the truth of human relationships, demand that the truth be honoured, and call humanity to healing through repentance and justice. The Biblical stories of repentance and justice often involve powerful people exploiting family members and neighbours. It is no accident that Jesus' genealogy in the gospel of Matthew includes at least two women who experienced sexual exploitation: Tamar and Bathsheba.

In Genesis 38 we read that Tamar's father-in-law, Judah, forced her to resort to prostitution to avoid destitution. When Judah publicly threatens to execute Tamar for an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, she reveals that he is the father of the unborn child in her womb. Judah is forced to acknowledge that Tamar had been more righteous than himself. In 2 Samuel 11 and 12, we learn that Bathsheba was married to King David's neighbour, Uriah the Hittite. Not only was she David's neighbour, she was the daughter of Eliam, one his 'thirty seven mighty men' (military champions) and the granddaughter of his senior advisor Ahithopel. Like a peeping tom, King David spies Bathsheba bathing while her husband is at the battlefield. The king arranges for the beautiful woman to be brought to him for his sexual pleasure.

Inconveniently for King David's public position, Bathsheba becomes pregnant and informs King David. He becomes aware of the immediate threat of public disgrace and recriminations from Bathsheba's influential father and grandfather. So because of Bathsheba's pregnancy in the absence of her husband, King David orders Joab, his most trusted senior general, to manipulate circumstances for the murder of Uriah. Sent by the Lord, the prophet Nathan publicly reveals King David's sexual exploitation and murderous behavior.

If you are paying attention to the ongoing work of Canada's National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, you will know that about half of the missing persons were involved in prostitution. What you may not know is that their involvement in prostitution includes circumstances similar to the experiences of Tamar and Bathsheba.

Little Warriors is a national organization committed to the awareness, prevention, and treatment of childhood sexual abuse; its website (www.littlewarriors.ca) presents a significant compilation of research about childhood sexual abuse in Canada. That distressing profile includes the statistic that 76% of prostitutes have a history of child sexual abuse. (My experience with sexually exploited people through the John School program of Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina suggests that almost all prostitutes have experienced sexual trauma.) Compounding that dynamic is the assertion that 95% of childhood sexual abuse cases go unreported.

My conversations with survivors indicate that many more suffered sexual abuse than the official statistics which report that one in five Indigenous students suffered sexual abuse at Canada's residential schools. Many survivors lacked the courage to speak, were silenced by shame, or have passed away and their experiences are held by stories shared with their relatives. These thousands of sexually abused survivors left their respective residential schools without adequate preparation for adult life either with their families in their First Nation communities or to participate in urban communities. Consequently, many of these vulnerable persons sought survival in urban ghettos across Canada where they were exposed to the life-destroying pressures of poverty, racism, violence, gangs, and inadequate housing.

Like other survivors of childhood sexual abuse they prematurely entered adulthood with social and psychological challenges including: low self-esteem, guilt, self-blame, social withdrawal, depression, life-disrupting anxieties about physical pains (somatic complaints), difficulties with sexuality, eroticized behaviour, irrational fears, anxiety, deliberate self-harm, depression, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and eating disorders. Simply put, there was little or no support for young adults who had suffered too much trauma at the hands of church- and government-sanctioned authorities. Consequently, many turned to alcohol or drug abuse to numb the haunting pain of child hood trauma. Many were caught up in a vicious cycle where the temporary relief provided by alcohol or drug abuse led to powerful addictions that made them vulnerable to prolonged sexual exploitation.

Indigenous people are reported by Statistics Canada to be 4.3% of the Canadian population. Although Statistics Canada does not keep national statistics on Indigenous women in prostitution, reports from cities and provinces reveal a high level of Indigenous women in prostitution. It was reported in 2001 that [14 to 60% of prostituted youth are First Nations people](#), depending on the province in question. In 2013, the National Post reported that "About 70% of the girls in the sex trade in Winnipeg are Aboriginal." Prostitution may or may not be the world's oldest profession, but it is certainly a deadly business. A study in the American Journal of Epidemiology found that the workplace homicide rate for prostitutes was 50 times greater than the next most perilous situation, women working in a liquor store.

The racist reality is that the majority of prostitutes' customers are Caucasian men who feel entitled to brutalize their sex worker, who all too often is an Indigenous survivor of traumatic childhood sexual abuse. Certainly not all of them are as evil as Robert Picton of Abbotsford, B.C. who was convicted of killing 6 prostitutes, but who may be responsible for the gruesome deaths of up to 49 victims. One former Aboriginal prostitute reports that "her clientele was so predominantly white that, even today "I can't be on an elevator with a Caucasian man." It seems that not too much has changed since 1792 when the

Chipewyan Indians complained of the injustice done to them by Canadians in [taking their women from them by force](#).

In June 2017, nine months after the National Inquiry was launched, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reported “Indigenous women and girls in Canada face greater risks of violence and homicide.” Ironically, for a long time, relatives of missing and murdered Indigenous people have complained about the inadequate response from police services to their reports of missing family members. Bridget Perrier, who was adopted into a Caucasian family, recalls, “When I would go missing, my dad was told not to report me as an Aboriginal girl, just to say I was Caucasian, because if he said I was Aboriginal, they [police] wouldn’t look for me.” Like so many others, her child abuse began when she was sexually assaulted by a boarder in her adoptive home at the age of eight.

As the National Inquiry proceeds, it must consider childhood sexual abuse as one of the causal factors contributing to the spectre of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. That will be an uncomfortable process for the Inquiry staff and for the people of Canada. If the Inquiry is effective, it will help Canadian society to recognize the ‘Judahs’ and ‘King Davids’ in Canadian society and history who have used positions of power and privilege to sexually exploit vulnerable Indigenous people. The National Inquiry has the mandate to be like the prophet Nathan and say to Canadian society, “You are responsible for your missing sisters!”

May the Lord give them the time, resources, and courage to do that work and may the Creator give us the grace and humility that, like King David, we may confess our culpability and take responsibility for our sisters.

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Now talk to Jesus.

Footnotes and Resources for Further Reading

- [Trafficked: Missing and Murdered](#) (Globe and Mail)
- [On Winnipeg’s Streets, Young Sex for Sale](#) (National Post)
- [Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation of Youth](#). (2001). Sexual Exploitation of Youth in British Columbia. Victoria: Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry for Children and Families, and Ministry of Health.
- [‘Mortality in a Long-term Open Cohort of Prostitute Women.’](#) American Journal of Epidemiology, Volume 159, Issue 8, 15 April 2004, Pages 778–785,
- [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#) (2017 Royal Canadian Mounted Police report)
- [Former Prostitute Warns Chiefs about Dangers of the Sex Trade](#) (CBC)

Adapted from: <http://dojustice.crcna.org/article/she-my-sister>

Soul Food Day 5

Scripture

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 (NIV)

¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

The Sex Industry and the Church

We, as the church, exist in the midst of a present darkness--a struggle, not just against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities, and powers in the spiritual realm. We are also called to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power equipped with the full armor of God --standing firm in its truth, righteousness and peace, being always protected through faith and salvation and armed with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God (Ephesians 6).

Abuse Awareness Sunday a few years ago focused on the sex industry and the church. Why is Safe Church talking about the sex industry? Because it's not primarily a problem "out there"--it's an industry of systematized abuse that in many ways already darkens our homes and neighborhoods, and is a force contributing to many other forms of abuse. Every fourth Sunday of September, CRC congregations are invited to stand against the darkness of abuse, and participate in [Abuse Awareness Sunday](#). Our struggle is complex as we live in God's world; we can find ourselves complicit in the very thing we are standing against. It is important we remember and lament this present darkness. These materials are developed to be helpful at any time of year--abuse is a year-round problem.

The industry is not just a porn issue; it's bigger and broader. It is estimated to be a 99 billion dollar industry worldwide and holds more slaves captive today than the transatlantic slave trade of a prior era. Think for a minute about the wide reach that the sex industry has on all of our lives. It isn't so distant; it's in our own homes and our backyards. What can we do to protect our families, congregations, and communities? Pray with us for the strength and courage to speak against this industry.

Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 6 in The Message read: "Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, 'The two become one.' Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never 'become one.'" In contrast to God's beautiful design, the sex industry takes an incredible gift and uses greed, violence, and coercion to exploit God's image in people, and to destroy God's design for relationship. As the church, we are called to be salt and light, to reveal truth, and to stand against evil, including the devastating evil of the sex industry.

Here are some things you can do right now to help your church consider and respond to the problem of abuse:

- Host a screening of the film "Over 18", to learn about the problem of porn and how it contributes to abuse and to take action to make porn less accessible to kids online.
- Get to know the available resources from the [Safe Church website](#). Look at them with an eye for what might connect with your congregation.
- Offer to lead a prayer liturgy, or lament that focuses on the topic of the sex industry.

- Contact small group or adult Sunday school leaders to see if they might be interested in devoting one meeting to the discussion of the sex industry.
- Join with a community organization that works against sexual exploitation. The Church needs to step into these places to be the salt and light that we are called to be. There are many organizations who are working to prevent exploitation, as well as organizations that are working with those who have been trafficked for sex and are now rebuilding their lives. Where is the Church?
- Participate in efforts to influence policy; contact your representatives regarding policies that would prevent sexual exploitation and protect those who are vulnerable.
- Use this opportunity to promote the [Circle of Grace program](#), which equips children and you to participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.
- If you have any questions or need more ideas or resources contact us at Safe Church Ministry.

Here's a prayer you can use at your church or with your family to pray against the evils of the sex industry:

Creator God, you know all things. Even the darkness is light to you. You are not blind to those caught in the grip of the sex industry. You know each person intimately. You regard the devastation, fueled by violence, lust, and greed. You know all about the shame, heartache, and despair. You have noted each tear and you hear the cries.

Wake up your Church, Lord! Show us your heart for those who are suffering. Help your people to be sources of your transforming love, a powerful love that can heal and bring hope. May you strengthen your Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to stand against this evil. Guide us Lord, for the sake of your Great Name, and for your glory.

May your kingdom come, on this earth now, as it is in heaven. Make us a part of the answer to our prayers. We pray boldly in the name of our precious savior, Jesus Christ, who upholds all things and each of us by his mercy and grace. Amen.

Application

4. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
5. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
6. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Now talk to Jesus.

Adapted from: <http://dojustice.crcna.org/article/sex-industry-and-church>