

# Human Trafficking and the Church: Towards a Biblical and Practical Christian Response

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## **Abstract**

How should Christians respond to the ever-growing international crime of human trafficking? This study seeks an answer by holding up the current situation to the light of the mission of Jesus as expressed in Luke 4:16–21, and formulating the outline of a practical, workable model of response. It explores the international and South African situation surrounding modern-day slavery and human trafficking from a Salvation Army perspective by consulting several expert studies, illustrating this reality by telling the stories of five women who were trafficked. Using the mission statement of Jesus as a basis for Christian love in action and building on the unique strengths of the church, this study suggests requirements and key areas for a response by which the church as a whole, as well as individual congregations and Christians may have a positive impact as part of a modern abolition movement.

## **Keywords**

human trafficking, Luke 4:16–21, modern-day slavery, abolition

## 1. Introduction

Maria: She stands on a street corner, scantily dressed on a cold Johannesburg winter evening. Her eyes scan the passing traffic, and she is not keen to engage in conversation, although she seems grateful for the hot cup of coffee offered to her by a street worker. Maria is a commercial sex worker in the south of Johannesburg. She has a pimp and lives in a brothel. She was offered a job in Johannesburg via a niece, and travelled to Johannesburg alone, against the advice of her parents. Once in the city, she discovered that the nature of the ‘job’ was prostitution. She cannot leave because she does not have enough money to pay the fare home, and because she is addicted to drugs and needs the daily fix they provide.

Sophie: They are usually huddled together on the pavement that forms an island in the middle of the busy road. The older woman is always accompanied by two small children. On Sunday mornings they make their way into the church for worship. The children lead the blind woman to a vacant seat near the front. Just before the conclusion of the service they leave quietly and return to their assigned task for the day—begging on the street corner. Sophie is one of many beggars on the street corners of Johannesburg. These beggars are blind, many are elderly, and they are accompanied and led by children in their work. They are given accommodation and are taken to their ‘posts’ in the morning and collected again in the late afternoon. They are given food, but all their proceeds must be handed over to the man who runs the establishment. Sophie is from Zimbabwe and believes herself to be lucky to have been brought to South Africa, because she has been promised an operation that will restore her sight. She is not in possession of her passport or any of her documentation. It is not clear who the children are that accompany her.

Christina: She agrees to meet at a small coffee shop. She tells her story of terror. She was deceived by someone within the agency she worked for, transported a thousand kilometers, and forced to work as a prostitute until she was desperate enough to risk a dangerous escape. Does she have AIDS? Is she pregnant? She does not know. She refuses to report her story to the police because she has received serious threats from her traffickers.

Jennifer: She is brought to the shelter for victims of human trafficking<sup>1</sup> with a laptop computer, a mobile phone and very little else in terms of worldly possessions. A Zimbabwean citizen, she was lured to South Africa by a businessman who offered her a large salary to work for him as his assistant. She travelled to Johannesburg in possession of a valid passport and visa (both of which were taken from her upon her arrival), expecting to enter a very normal and pleasant working environment. The work she was required to do was indeed of a business nature as a private secretary, but she was locked in her apartment at night and did not receive any payment for her work until she escaped three months later.

Celeste: She stands fearfully, surrounded by a small circle of women in the city center of Johannesburg. They seem concerned and agitated as they discuss her situation in a language she does not understand. She is just seven years old and lost in a strange country, a small foreigner amongst strangers. She was taken from her remote village in Mozambique by a 'friend' of the family without her parents' permission and brought to Johannesburg. She somehow became separated from her abductor and was found and helped by a group of street hawkers. The reason for her abduction was never discovered.

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1 All references to human trafficking in this article refer to the umbrella-term 'modern-day slavery and human trafficking'.

These are fragments of some of the stories that make up the human face of this study. These real people (their names and some details changed to protect their identity) illustrate some of the different forms of human trafficking. Their stories are heard first-hand by members of The Salvation Army's anti-human trafficking task team in South Africa. Some of their stories have happy endings, others do not.

The main question this study seeks to answer is how Christians should respond to human trafficking in the South African context. Sub-questions focus on what is known about human trafficking in South Africa, what the Bible says about challenging and responding to injustice, and how the church responded to slavery in history.

Using the Loyola Institute of Ministry research design, which typically moves from an empirical description of a given situation as it is, through a Biblical-theological description of how the situation should be, to a suggested practical response that could help to move the current reality closer towards the ideal situation, this study argues that the church can make a significant difference in the struggle against human trafficking. The 'what if' question (Sandelowski 1990, 164) becomes a pivotal part of the narrative section, and acts as a bridge between the present situation and the preferred situation by drawing attention to what could have been done to prevent the situation or resolve it more expediently and painlessly, moving the focus from the world as it is, to the world as it should be. To understand the preferred situation, or the world as it should be, a study of historical and biblical thinking reflects on themes of freedom and slavery, focusing on the mission of Jesus and the mission of the church. This study has been conducted through a Salvation Army lens, but hopefully, the resulting model will be equally useful for other denominations and congregations.

## 2. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking—An Overview

The definition underpinning the study is provided by the Palermo Protocol (UN General Assembly 2000, 2), which defines human trafficking as,

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or in the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. 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.

Essential criteria in deciding whether a case should be classified as human trafficking are legally classified under the elements of act, means, and purpose as laid out in this definition.

### *2.1 Scope of the issue*

Reliable statistics are hard to come by. The fact that organizations and agencies tend to disagree on the scope of human trafficking in terms of statistics, adds further frustration. Today the Global Slavery Index,<sup>2</sup> a worldwide study on slavery published by the Walk Free foundation is a helpful tool and provides a clearer picture of the dimensions of human trafficking. According to the Index, South Africa ranks at 110/167 on a

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2 <https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/data/country-data/south-africa/>

worldwide scale of countries affected by human trafficking, and based on 2016 figures, an estimated 155,000 people are living in modern slavery in South Africa. On a worldwide scale, the Index estimates that 40.3 million people are living in modern slavery, of whom 71 percent are women and 29 percent men. Children make up a significant percentage of both these groups.

International and South African studies agree that human trafficking is a flourishing and often highly-organized criminal trade in human beings. These studies indicate the changing nature of the face of human trafficking, including the global movement of migrants and refugees that has become a worldwide crisis, leaving many people vulnerable to exploitation by both traffickers and smugglers (UNODC 2016, 1). The inclusion of targets towards an end to human trafficking in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (8, 5 and 16) is a significant development (UNODC 2016, 1). The conclusion of almost all international and South African studies that law-making and/or law-enforcement cannot solve the problem of human trafficking on its own should be of special interest to the church. The clear indication is that there is much to be done that can only be accomplished with the help of civil society on a grassroots level (HSRC 2010, 110; IOM 2008, 64; UNODC 2012, 94). The church, being situated in the very center of communities, has knowledge, power and resources that would be well spent in cooperation with other parties to prevent and reduce slavery and human trafficking.

## *2.2 Legislation in South Africa*

South Africa started working on a law against human trafficking in 2008, under pressure from the international community in the form of a ranking system, also known as a tier system, devised by the US Department of State which placed South Africa on its Tier 2 watch list in that year. Further

pressure was caused by the imminence of the 2010 FIFA World Cup that was to be hosted in South Africa, and the links between international sporting events and human trafficking. The Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Bill was signed into law in 2013 (Department of Justice Official Notice 2012). In the ensuing years, South Africa has fluctuated between 'Tier 2' and 'Tier 2 watch list' (US Department of State 2017, 362).

### *2.3 Vulnerabilities*

Whilst anyone can be at risk of being trafficked, it is a crime that exploits vulnerabilities and feeds on world events like disasters, wars and conflict, migration, and economic crises. Some special vulnerabilities have been identified, showing the most vulnerable groups to include refugees and migrants, minority groups, women, children and people experiencing extreme poverty (The Salvation Army International Social Justice Commission 2018). Further underlying issues are rooted in unemployment, gender inequality, and inadequate education (The Salvation Army, Southern Africa Moral and Social Issues Council 2010). Around the world unjust systems that perpetuate vulnerabilities and facilitate human trafficking still exist. These systems that are built on inequality and prejudice may be of a political, cultural, religious, or historical nature. Rigorous and honest research, followed by courageous and strategic action, is needed to challenge these systems.

### *2.4 The Salvation Army and social justice*

The Salvation Army, having its historical roots in Wesleyan Methodism, has from its inception been actively engaged in issues of social justice around the world. Challenging the age of consent in Victorian England where young

girls of the poor classes were commonly exploited as sex slaves to wealthy merchants (Stead 1885), was the starting point of an active approach to sexual exploitation, including rescue shelters in Japan in the early 1900s (Garipey 2009, 44), a redemptive presence in the red-light district of Amsterdam (Duncan 1977, 48), and outreach in the brothels of Bangladesh (Brekke and Knut 2005), to mention just a few examples. Today, The Salvation Army's response to human trafficking is well developed and documented.

### **3. The Mission of Jesus and the Mission of the Church**

Christians, in seeking to understand God's mind on any issue, will usually turn to the Bible as their first port of call. In doing this, the enquirer is inevitably left to wonder what, if anything, the Bible really says about slavery. On the surface the Bible appears to advocate for freedom and yet appears to accept slavery. References to slaves and slavery present a theological maze, perplexing in apparent dichotomy, leaving the reader confused and bewildered about its actual message.

It became clear that focusing on a specific NT passage would shed more light on the subject of slavery and how Christians should respond, and Luke 4:18–21 was selected. Known as the “Nazareth Sermon” (Kimball 1994, 179) or the “programmatically declaration” of Jesus (Abogunrin 2003, 225) this passage contains the first sermon of Jesus in the Gospel according to Luke, outlining his mission statement and the purpose of his coming with reference to Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1, 2. In studying these passages, the first question was about the mission of Jesus and the second question was about the mission of the church. This study reflected on whether the mission of the church is the same as the mission of Jesus, and, if so, the question raised was how God's people should respond to the crime and justice issue of human trafficking.

The context of the passage was studied, giving special attention to the significance of origin and order as well as culture and custom. In researching the text, the combination and word order of the quotations from Isaiah were noted, and a text analysis was conducted with special reference to freedom. Subsequently, the content of the passage was examined, reflecting on each separate section of the whole. Finally, an enquiry was made into Jesus's choice of the specific texts from Isaiah, and his introduction of himself as the real "I" of the passages. In doing so, the conclusion was reached that Jesus extends the mission plan of God in relation to the children of Israel in the OT, to the mission plan of God for all of humankind throughout all time.

This study concludes the mission of Jesus to be a holistic mission of word (proclamation, v. 18, 19) and deed (bringing release, freedom and salvation, v. 18) to the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed in the realms of the spiritual, social, moral and physical. It also concludes that the mission of the church (the sent) is the mission of Jesus (the sender) who sent as he was sent by the Father, and that our mission too is one of word and deed to the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed in every sense of the word (Mercer 1992, 457).

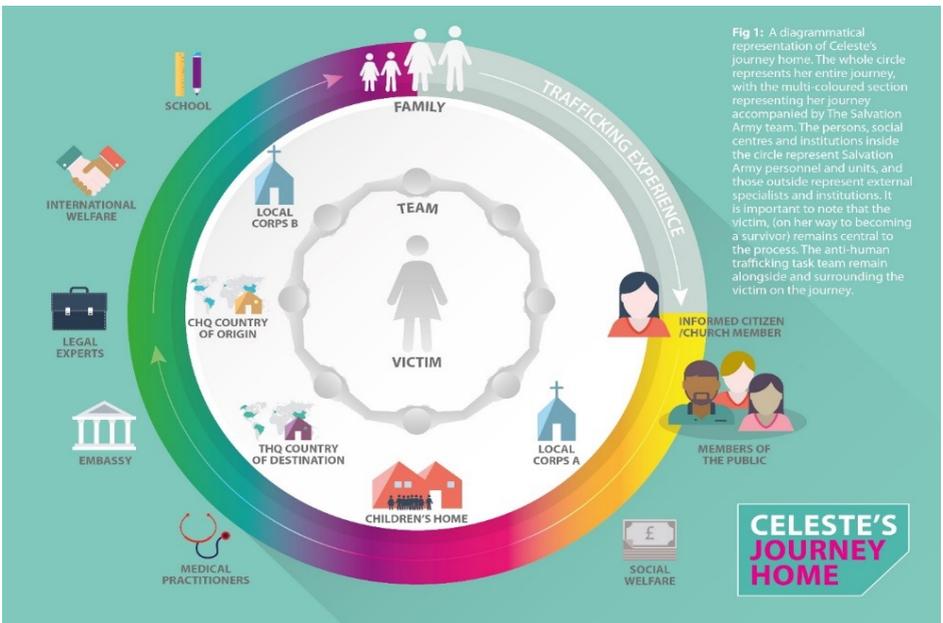
How then, should the church fulfil its mission in confronting human trafficking, a criminal act that robs human beings of their right to freedom and turns them into merchandise or property? This study proposes the following model of response.

#### **4. Being Part of the Solution: A Practical Response to Human Trafficking**

Returning briefly to the stories of Maria, Sophie, Christina, Jennifer, and Celeste, the question may well be asked: Is there, or could there have been, a way home for them? Perhaps an even better question would be: Is there

a way in which their traumatic journeys could have been prevented, and could the church have been part of this prevention? The model graphic below is entitled “Celeste’s way home” and indicates the centrality of the victim, the importance of the team (in this case The Salvation Army’s Anti-Human Trafficking Task Team in South Africa), and the impossibility of the task if it were to be undertaken in isolation and without numerous partners. In the case of Celeste, these partners include government agencies, non-government agencies, professionals, and experts, as well as groups and individuals representing civil society in finding a way home (or to a safe place) for victims of human trafficking.

**Figure 1 Glossary:**  
**Corps = congregation, THQ/CHQ = national head office**



#### *4.1 Strengths and limitations*

In formulating a specific church response to human trafficking, it seems advisable to begin by focusing on the foundational realities of strengths and limitations of the church in responding to human trafficking. Strengths include its presence at grassroots level in communities around the world. A second strength lies in its good name, and the trust that the public, many governments, and other agencies place in its integrity and capacity to make a difference in matters of social justice. A third strength may be called the approval of heaven, as reflected in the conviction of Danielle Strickland (2006) in her address to the Canadian parliament, “that light is more powerful than darkness, and God is on our side.” However, taking a stand against human trafficking, the source of which is an evil kind of greed and cruelty, places the church in direct opposition to the very kingdom and armies of Satan himself. Whilst there are many things the church can do (raise awareness, educate, train, advocate, care for victims and survivors, support families, address the root causes of poverty, inequality and prejudice, and do a host of other things), there are many activities (law-making, law-enforcement, border control, criminal investigations, arrests, trials, sentencing, and international negotiations, to mention a few) required to eradicate this crime outside the scope of its mission or capacity. The church is not equipped to deal with the issue of human trafficking on its own. The diagram above illustrates this concept through the story of Celeste.

It is important to acknowledge that each incident of human trafficking is different, and each victim and survivor will have different needs and require a bespoke response. Therefore, to write about a model may seem generic and generalized. The best that may be done is to formulate the ‘broad strokes’ or the framework of a model within which it will be possible to respond meaningfully to the issue of human trafficking,

in the context of teamwork, and keeping the victim or survivor central to the process.

#### *4.2 Requirements for a response*

Inspired by the narratives of Maria, Sophie, Christina, Jennifer and Celeste (and many others) and guided by the ‘what if’ questions that emerged from their stories, this paper aims to answer the question of how the church should respond to human trafficking by suggesting a number of requirements as a guideline. It stands to reason that the specifics of a response to human trafficking will vary from place to place and from time to time. Human trafficking is a crime that evolves and changes constantly, and the response must also be adaptable and flexible.

**Person-centered:** It is important to continue to offer a response that is victim (or survivor) focused, keeping in view the fact that, “Every single occurrence of modern slavery is happening to a person—someone’s sister, mother, brother, father, daughter, or son” (USA Department of State 2012, 10). A person-centered response may also be focused on potential victims through awareness and education programs that are adapted to culture and location, as well as the demographics of the target group. To be ethical in our methods, rehabilitation models should ideally be self-determined and individually tailored, even though it would be cheaper and quicker to adopt a ‘one-size-fits-all’ response.

**Bible-based:** Since the mission of the church and its calling to respond to exploitation in the form of human trafficking is clearly founded on the Bible (see section 3), its response should also be Bible-based. It must be rooted in the biblical principles of love, justice, respect, protection of the weak and vulnerable, and the right to fullness of life (John 10:10) for all people.

**Partnership-empowered:** Cooperation is vital for any effective response and will include partnership between like-minded denominations, organizations, agencies, and specialists. Representation on national and international bodies should be a priority. It is important to remain in touch and up to date with the evolution of human trafficking, and with issues of research and response (HRSC 2010, 171). A holistic and comprehensive response will require teamwork that involves finding common ground and possibly a measure of compromise on non-essentials (Pallant 2012, 168, 169).

**Learning-enhanced:** It is important to continue to conduct and share ongoing research and documentation (UNODC 2012, 90). This should include creating a databank of resources containing knowledge, information, skills, and experience, as well as reference to the multitude of specialized training materials and manuals dealing with human trafficking that have already been developed by national and international agencies. Collating, storing, and distributing data, resources, information, and knowledge has become much easier and faster in the digital age. Data can now be stored in the cloud, and information is easily disseminated via social networks and web pages. It must, however, be borne in mind that information in the wrong hands could be profoundly counterproductive, and all information in any form must be compliant with modern data protection laws.

**Impact-focused:** Impact measurement is a vital part of a learning-based response (USA Department of State 2012, 10). Some questions the church will ask in order to measure the impact of its efforts, will be whether these efforts are helping to decrease the number of victims, whether its training provision is sustainable and increasing capacity for action, and whether its awareness-raising campaigns are appropriately targeted.

**Strength-driven:** In addition to work that specifically combats human trafficking, the Church should continue to do what it does well, which is to address the root causes of human trafficking. Poverty and the lack of social and economic security are major factors that push people into migration and situations of vulnerability to exploitation. The church must continue to work for economic development and advocate for education, especially for girls. The church must also continue to build capacity in the poorest communities, and support fair-trade and other ethical trading models. Combatting human trafficking must include raising awareness about the exploitation of people on farms, in factories and many other industries, and should reflect in its own dealings such as the purchase of supplies and the procurement of services.

**Advocacy-enriched:** Since human trafficking is a crime that feeds on numerous systemic root causes like poverty and discrimination, the role of advocacy cannot be overemphasized (Offutt and Bronkema 2016, 6; Fileta 2017, 55). More than just raising awareness, advocacy aims at bringing change for people who are disadvantaged or suffering as a result of systemic injustice. Because of its positioning in communities, the local church is in an ideal position to be an effective mechanism for advocacy. Any response to human trafficking should not be limited to treating the symptoms or even the causes of human trafficking but should also include the ‘upstream’ work of advocating for just structures and systems.

**Motivated by the love of God and the example of Jesus:** Jesus was, in his earthly ministry, concerned about every aspect of human suffering (see section 3), and he not only valued human freedom, but also gave his life to make freedom a reality. As believers, our struggle against human trafficking is based on our firm belief that “God’s love compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14) in our efforts.

Having provided these essential requirements for a Christian response to human trafficking, it is possible to establish the basic key areas for an effective faith-based response. Whilst it would be necessary for all the requirements mentioned above to be present in a comprehensive Christian response, this is not the case with the key areas. Churches or congregations may choose to be involved in all, or only one or two of the areas mentioned, according to their capacity and mission priorities.

### *4.3 Key areas of a response to human trafficking*

In reflecting on the areas of a Christian response to human trafficking, it is not necessary to re-invent the proverbial wheel. At a workshop held in 2016 by The Salvation Army and the Anglican Alliance in Nepal, the 'seven P's model' was introduced and documented (2016, 32). The first three areas of response may be found in the Palermo Protocol (UN General Assembly 2000, 2), and a fourth was recommended in the USA Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report of 2012 (p. 7). Three further areas were considered important by Salvation Army consultation groups. The seven P's, as reflected in The Salvation Army International Positional Statement of 2018 (pp. 4, 5) are Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Partnerships, Policy, Participation, and Prayer. As a member of the design team of this model, the author offers the next section as a basic summary and her own interpretation and understanding of the seven P's model.

**Prevention:** The preferred way to combat anything undesirable is through prevention. Because of its unique position in communities, the church can be a powerful instrument in preventing human trafficking, utilizing at a minimum only its basic existing structures. Prevention initiatives may range from awareness campaigns, days of prayer, anti-trafficking or freedom Sundays, and fundraising.

**Protection:** Whilst prevention is aimed at people who may or may not necessarily be vulnerable to human trafficking, the area of protection focuses more on victims and survivors. When victims are identified, they need protection in terms of a safe exit from their situation and access to a place of safety where they may recover physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. Emergency support, short-term accommodation, basic supplies, care, support, and friendship are well within the scope that even the smallest congregation could offer. Church members are people from all walks of life, and amongst its members may be professionals and skilled persons who can offer expertise such as medical support, legal support, trauma care, skills training, counselling, and mentoring.

Churches may look out for and report cases of unethical labor practices and unscrupulous employment agencies. In cases of cross-border trafficking, the church as a worldwide body may also be of great value in terms of practical assistance in repatriation and rehabilitation.

**Prosecution:** The thought of being involved with matters of prosecution does not necessarily sit comfortably with the church and may seem quite out of its comfort zone. However, the church understands human trafficking as a criminal activity that affects the lives of thousands of people and the church realizes that calling people to account for their actions is an important part of combatting it. Churches can help by encouraging victims and survivors not to be silent but to call on and cooperate with law enforcement officers in the prosecution of their perpetrators. This encouragement may take the form of accompanying victims to police stations and courts of law, and of actively preparing them for court hearings. Victims/survivors must always be informed correctly of their legal rights, and church members should be aware of their legal limits and obligations as citizens.

In many places court cases take time, and witnesses may need to appear in several hearings over a period of months. In order to achieve success, it is often necessary to provide accommodation and the basic requirements of life for the victim while the proceedings are underway. The church may be of great help to someone whose life may be essentially in limbo until a legal court case has come to its conclusion.

**Policy:** The church as part of civil society recognizes its responsibility to be part of conversations about matters of national and international policy. The role of the church in advocacy is of great importance in the creation and implementation of effective policy regarding human trafficking, labor laws, laws relating to children's rights, and other related laws.

In addition to national and international legal policies, the church is also well positioned to influence many other policy issues like consumer habits and practices. Congregations, businesses, and individuals must be made aware of the consequences of their choice of products and services.

**Partnerships:** No single movement or organization can fight against human trafficking. In my experience, some of the most important partnerships the church should have are with the national police, prosecuting authorities, social welfare, and the national border control agency, as well as foreign embassies. On a more local level, each congregation is based in a community with schools, police stations, other churches and worshipping communities, clubs, groups, clinics and more—all of whom share a basic concern for the community and a desire for its people to live in safety. It is therefore easy for churches to reach out and join forces with other churches, non-government agencies, educational institutions, faith leaders and community leaders in order to safeguard their communities against exploitation and human trafficking and work together for justice and safety. The stories told in the beginning of this article illustrate the value of partnerships.

**Participation:** The church with all its varied expressions is well positioned to participate in the fight against human trafficking, with possible actions ranging from very basic to high-level, specialized involvement. In fact, even the smallest congregations in the remotest of places may be very successful agents of change, helping their communities to prevent human trafficking and creating safe and robust communities. Activities well within the remit of the church may include calls to prayer, freedom Sundays, peaceful marches or demonstrations, awareness campaigns and training events, as well as the sharing of information and resources. Churches can support and participate in any local community action against human trafficking, such as campaigns and awareness-raising events. Participation by local churches may also take a more individual form, such as church members volunteering their time and skills in efforts to prevent trafficking, protect survivors, and prosecute traffickers.

Prevention, protection, prosecution, policy, partnership, and participation are all vital areas of engagement in combatting human trafficking, and the church has a greater or lesser role to play in each one. There is one area of response, however, in which every single Christian and every Church unit can, and should play a part, and that is the area of prayer.

**Prayer:** Prayer is foundational to all Christian service. Mari Williams (Fileta 2017, 43) describes prayer as underpinning everything Christians do. “Prayer is at the core of the kingdom task of seeking justice.” Alita Ram (Fileta 2017, 45) agrees by naming prayer as the bedrock of every effort of Christians to work for justice. Brueggemann (2018, 66) describes prayer as “a refusal to settle for what is” and writes in his book *Interrupting Silence* that, “the very fact of prayer is a way to remain courageous, a way to resist resignation that would result in losing heart” (2018, 84).

Prayer is an appealing and inspiring challenge for groups and individuals of all ages, and it is accessible to all who share a burden for people who are exploited by means of human trafficking. Ideas and initiatives include prayer groups, prayer walks, special days of prayer such as an anti-human trafficking Sunday or weekend. Churches and denominations may choose to share in these events together in unity and solidarity.

Providing and regularly updating resources and prayer guides are helpful for focused and informed prayer, whether private or corporate. Prayer topics may include victims, survivors, vulnerable people, persons and organizations who work against human trafficking, politicians, police personnel, law makers, judges, prosecutors, and even perpetrators.

#### *4.4 Getting started*

This study reflects on the journey of The Salvation Army in Southern Africa in the early years of this century with the joy of having been a grateful fellow traveler, and with the benefit of hindsight. Much of the journey was a roller coaster ride, being catapulted from one stage of the journey to the next by increased knowledge and information, by need and by the open doors of opportunity, and the response was often more pragmatic and intuitive than strategic. Plotting the journey and noting the lessons learned might be useful to other churches and believers. This study confirms that any Christian response to human trafficking must be accompanied by prayer and guided by thorough research. Armed with prayer support and research, a church or group will progress to the stage of designing and implementing a strategy.

## 5. Conclusion

The stories of Maria, Sophie, Christina, Jennifer, and others have touched our hearts, broken our hearts, and filled our hearts with a longing for justice. This study endeavors to answer the question of how Christians should respond to the crime of human trafficking, by means of the Loyola Institute of Ministry research design. Starting with an empirical description of the situation in South Africa, and followed by a biblical-theological description of the mission of Jesus and the mission of the church, the study tells the story of one team, outlining some of the important lessons learned and suggesting a practical response that could help to move the current reality of exploitation of human beings closer towards the ideal situation of freedom for all.

The stories present the church with a question and a challenge. The question concerns how the heart of God responds to these and millions of other lives affected by human trafficking. The challenge is how his people will respond.

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