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30-DAY

PRAYER GUIDE

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FAITH **IN** ACTION

30-DAY PRAYER GUIDE

It can be difficult at times to know how to pray when faced with a glaring injustice. There are moments we may not know what to say or we may even feel that our prayers are insignificant in the face of something as dark and destructive as the commercialized sex market and sex trafficking.

However, God in His wisdom knew we would face these challenges and continually reminds us through Scripture that prayer is one of the greatest gifts and tools He has provided to His children (James 5:13-16). We've also been granted the power of His Spirit, which serves as an intercessor, when words seem to fail us (Romans 8:26).

The purpose of this 30-day prayer guide is to draw us into the Word as a body of believers, to remind us of God's love and care for all of His children regardless of their current circumstances, and to help direct our prayers as we become more engaged in the broken world around us. Scripture references are by no means exhaustive, but we hope the prayers they inspire are a starting point for a bold appeal to God on behalf of every man, woman, and child who has suffered harm through sexual exploitation and slavery.

+ DAY 1

*"While [Jesus] was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. "Leave her alone," said Jesus. Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them anytime you want. But you will not always have me. **She did what she could...**" Mark 14:3-8*

Jesus said Mary did a beautiful thing, she did what she could. Mary did one simple action, something she could do immediately with what she had to make a difference.

Sometimes the issue of sex trafficking is overwhelming and it's hard to know where to begin. We need to strengthen laws, spread awareness, increase shelters, raise funds, train professionals, and the list goes on. But if we each do what we can, together, we'll make a huge impact.

Prayer focus:

- Wisdom to know how to become involved in combatting trafficking.
- To be alert and responsive when God shows you how to engage.

+ DAY 2

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

Could Paul have anticipated what "the pattern of this world" would come to? Today, video games allow players to have first-person sex with and then murder "prostitutes." Because of websites like Backpage.com, buying sex with a child is as easy as ordering a pizza. Other "patterns of this world" like watching pornography, going with the guys to the strip club, or laughing at jokes that stigmatize prostituted women all contribute to cultural tolerance for the commercialization and exploitation of men, women, boys and girls.

Prayer focus:

- Words and actions to honor and support those who have been victimized through sexual exploitation.
- Boldness to influence and encourage friends and family to avoid destructive and harmful behavior.

+ DAY 3

"He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

We are reminded that justice, mercy and humility before God are part of an integrated response. Neither justice alone nor mercy alone is the response God requires. Furthermore, neither is acceptable absent humble submission to His leading.

Prayer focus:

- Having the proper measure of justice and mercy.
- A humble heart before God.

+ DAY 4

"Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." Isaiah 1:17-17

On Father's Day 2006, Vern Smith, husband of Shared Hope's President and Founder, Linda Smith, created the Defenders USA. Born out of the belief that men are naturally wired to defend, this group of men takes a pledge to oppose the commercial sex industry in all its forms and defend their family and friends against it.

Prayer focus:

- That men everywhere would honor their calling as defenders of women and children through words and actions.

+ DAY 5

“But I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. He ransoms me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me.”

Psalm 55:16-18

David wrote this Psalm at a time when his safety was threatened. He was no stranger to severe danger, and neither are trafficked victims. Research indicates that trafficking victims can face Post Traumatic Stress Disorder because of the intense, prolonged period of danger and fear they endure during their trafficking experience. Danger eagerly awaits them at the hands of a violent pimp, aggressive buyers, and even law enforcement agents can elicit fear for victims.

Prayer focus:

- The protection and safety of sex trafficking victims.
- The safety of those who seek to rescue victims of trafficking.

+ DAY 6

“Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Behold, we did not know this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?” Proverbs 24:11-12.

These are sobering words! We are not accountable for what we don't know...but once we do know, we are held responsible. Keep in mind that there is no directive to *solve* the problem, but there is clear direction to do *something* to assist the oppressed once we become aware. That “something” is a very personal matter between you and God. One response that is always correct is to pray.

Prayer focus:

- Now that I know, what would God have me do in obedience to this direction?

+ DAY 7

“Guard me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from violent men who have planned to trip up my feet. The arrogant have hidden a trap for me, and with cords they have spread a net; beside the way they have set snares for me.” Psalm 140:4-5.

Children are the targets of traffickers who use deliberate deceptions designed to entrap them. Many naively step into the trap and too late realize they didn't choose, but were chosen. Helpless to resist the violence and abuse, the only way to survive is to submit. This is why Shared Hope produced our awareness resource for young people—Chosen—to keep more from being caught in the snare.

Prayer focus:

- The protection of vulnerable young people from the lies and deceptions of traffickers.

+ DAY 8

“In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. Look to the right and see: there is none that takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul. I cry to you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.’ Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! Bring me out of prison that I may give thanks to your name!” Psalm 142: 3b-7a.

For those who fall into the sex trafficker's trap, David's words of desperation resonate deeply. They see no refuge and feel that no one cares. In what practical ways can I “find” them and let them know I care? “The goal of faithfulness is not that we will do work for God, but that He will be free to do His work through us” (Oswald Chambers). Perhaps I can volunteer with a local organization ministering to victims or become a mentor to survivors.

Prayer focus:

- To have the privilege of connecting with someone who is crying out to the Lord.
- To be the hands and feet and hearts sent by God to deliver her and represent His compassion for her.

+ DAY 9

"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28.

While this verse can be taken as very personal and applying to each individual who loves God and is called according to his purpose, it might also be taken to mean that he works things together for good for the body of believers according to his own sovereign plan. Given the limits of human understanding, it is usually impossible to see how circumstances, personal or global, are under God's sovereign control; but the faithful person, called by God, will trustingly join with Him in the outworking of His good plan.

Prayer focus:

- Faithfulness and trust that I don't need to understand His plan for a particular person or situation in order to be effectively used in that plan.

+ DAY 10

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."
James 1:5.*

Strong anti-trafficking response is dependent, in part, on the wisdom of leaders and law makers. The laws and policies they create directly affect survivors' access to justice. State and federal laws also dictate acceptable investigation procedures and sentencing for traffickers and buyers. Our leaders must be willing to address this issue if we want to make progress in the movement to end trafficking.

Prayer focus:

- Wisdom for leaders in creating or amending laws to provide sufficient penalties for traffickers and buyers and maximizing access to justice for victims.

+ DAY 11

“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.”
Romans 12:4-6

In our years of operating anti-trafficking programs around the world, one resounding lesson holds true: collaboration is key. Those who were called to professions that directly impact sex trafficking victims, like law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and shelter and service providers, must be equipped with the knowledge, resources and strength necessary to accomplish their very important role.

Prayer focus:

- Wisdom, knowledge, resources, patience and safety for professionals—social service providers, prosecutors, judges—and all those who serve victims of trafficking.

+ DAY 12

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
Romans 8:38-39

It is freeing to know that nothing we do can make God love us any less, or any more! That can be difficult to accept when we feel ashamed or worthless, but it is true. Because of the stigmatization of prostitution, sex trafficking survivors often struggle with shame and feelings of worthlessness. Traffickers view them as a paycheck, buyers view them as an object for sexual gratification, society views them as a criminal, but God views them as worthy of His unchanging and unfailing love.

Prayer focus:

- Survivors of trafficking to know that they are loved by the Lord.
- Christian mentors for survivors to encourage and support their release and healing.

+ DAY 13

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord." Romans 12:17-19

It is so difficult to hear the horror stories of trauma, violence and degradation that our survivor friends have faced and NOT want to take revenge on the one who caused it! But we are reminded to leave it to the One more powerful than us. Vengeance is not our job. What if, instead, we prayed *for* the traffickers and buyers? If a nation of faithful, praying people ask the Lord to change their hearts, can we make a dent in the prevalence of those who seek to exploit our children? Let's find out.

Prayer focus:

- For traffickers' and buyers' hearts and actions to change.
- The Lord to remove the scales from their eyes so traffickers and buyers can see their destructive behavior and turn from it.

+ DAY 14

"Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

The Message renders this verse: "...take plenty of time to think it over and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving." We often hear the part about giving cheerfully, but what about the giving wisely? As good stewards of what we have been given, we are instructed to engage our minds and not just our emotions in decisions about where God would have us share a portion of our earnings or possessions. We can't lose when we do the things that please God.

Prayer focus:

- That I may discern worthy causes that merit my support.
- A spirit of sharing cheerfully from the blessings I've received.

+ DAY 15

"I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears... the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my plea; the Lord accepts my prayer." Psalm 6: 6-9 (excerpt)

So many of David's cries to the Lord are echoed in the cries of the prisoners of sex trafficking. The prison of the spirit endures for a very long time, even after physical freedom, and is often debilitating and accompanied by the symptoms of the complex trauma. Many survivors claim the healing of their spiritual injury was the turning point in the journey to recovery.

Prayer focus:

- May sex trafficking victims still in bondage, or still suffering, have assurance that the Lord hears them and will deliver them.

+ DAY 16

"God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day. If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow...the wicked man conceives evil...he makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends."

Psalm 7:11-16 (excerpt)

May we always remember that God is a righteous judge! He is indignant about the evil done to His precious ones and He alone is in control of the just outcome for evildoers. As His emissaries here on earth, we do our best to deal justly through civil and criminal responses, but we must always keep in mind the very limited understanding we have of His greater purposes.

Prayer focus:

- Help me to remember that God's ways are not my ways and he will ultimately provide a just response to the buyers and traffickers who perpetrate violence against his precious ones.

+ DAY 17

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you.” 1 Peter 5:10

We are told that there is an eternal reward after suffering for those that are called by Christ. Christians differ on what it means to be called, but can perhaps unite around the idea that suffering will end and God has eternal and glorious plans for those that believe in him.

Prayer focus:

- That all those in suffering will be restored and strengthened.

+ DAY 18

“For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.” Proverbs 2:6-15

A multi-billion dollar industry exists for the sole purpose of deceiving men and boys into believing that viewing pornography or buying of sex is normal and harmless entertainment. The wisdom that comes from knowledge of the Lord is a shield against the pull of the culture into these lies and perversions.

Prayer focus:

- For all the men and boys in my life, that they will resist the siren song of pornography and the deceptions of people that will attempt to lure them into using women and girls as objects of sexual satisfaction.

+ DAY 19

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.” Proverbs 3:27

The “good” that each of us can do can be something that seems dramatic, like opening a shelter for sex trafficked victims...or it might be something barely noticed, like looking into the eyes of someone you suspect is “in the life” and smiling encouragingly. Trafficking victims talk about the disdain turned their way from the glances of every “normal” person. Your smile at her might be the best thing that happens to her today.

Prayer focus:

- Let me be conscious of the fact that my facial expressions and gestures say a thousand words.
- Help me not to judge by appearances.

+ DAY 20

“O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” 2 Chronicles 20:12

All of us in the battle against sex trafficking have felt powerless in the face of the great assault of pornography and sexual perversion on our culture, yet the Lord’s response to this plea, found in verse 17, is moving and encouraging: “Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them and the Lord will be with you.”

Prayer focus:

- Remind me that my powerlessness is an opportunity to rely on the all-powerful Lord.

+ DAY 21

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

It’s not just a suggestion. It’s a command. The command is repeated often in the Old Testament—the Lord’s words are echoed by David to Solomon and again by Jehoshaphat to the Israelites. What a comfort to know that the Lord my God is with me wherever I go.

Prayer focus:

- I can’t obey this command without help. Help me to be strong, courageous, unafraid and undismayed.

+ DAY 22

“And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” Genesis 50:20

There is hardly a more dramatic story in the Bible than the story of Joseph, nor a more dramatic illustration of how God uses man's evil intent to bring about great good. He was betrayed by his own siblings, falsely accused, enslaved, forgotten. We can readily associate those very things with the plight of those that are sex trafficked. Let us be encouraged by how God turned the evil directed at Joseph into blessing and preservation for an entire nation.

Prayer focus:

- For trust in God that everything that happens is part of his plan, whether I can see it or not.
- For trust in God's goodness.

+ DAY 23

“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

We offered one view of this verse on day 9, but there are other interpretations. Another, shared by many, is that God causes all things that happen in a Christian's life to become part of the working out of His good plan for that individual believer. That good plan may be temporal, spiritual or eternal, or all of these things; our trust is in the all-knowing and all-powerful God.

Prayer focus:

- For the humility to recognize that His ways are not my ways. He will bring about freedom and restoration in His perfect timing.
- For faith to trust His plan for each individual life.

+ DAY 24

“He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me for they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a broad place; He rescued me, because He delighted in me.”

Psalm 18:17-20

The favorite ploy of traffickers is to seek out those in the day of their “calamity.” This brings to mind the many vulnerable children that become separated from their families during a natural disaster or children that daily experience the calamity of abuse in their own homes and run away in desperation, only to be confronted by something even worse.

Prayer focus:

- May the strong arm of God protect children all over the world from those too mighty for them to resist.
- May those in captivity be brought out from the darkness into a broad place where there is air and light and freedom.

+ DAY 25

“He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, He answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.” Isaiah 30:19-21

What a comfort to know that God immediately responds to our pitiful cries to Him. Sometimes those cries are in response to the anguish we feel when we suffer or when we see the suffering of others because we just cannot understand the why? Yet His response is not an explanation; rather it is simply assurance that He will guide each step of the way through the adversity.

Prayer focus:

- To trust God when I don't understand what He is doing or why.
- To have eyes that notice signs of His guidance and ears to hear His instruction moment by moment.

+ DAY 26

“God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy....” Psalm 68:6

God places the lonely in families. What a beautiful promise! Many are familiar with loneliness. Wishing for a friend, family member, or spouse who can provide a warm smile, a comforting hug, a gentle word. Traffickers know that we're built for relationship and commonly use this to exploit victims. Traffickers may promise friendship, romance, or family but instead supply violence, control and manipulation. Today's prayer focus is that God will supply a healthy response to a very healthy desire—family!

Prayer focus:

- Pray that survivors who do not have healthy family relationships or friendships would find them.
- Healing to family of survivors so that they may one day have reconciliation.
- Joy for survivors in the freedom that they now have.

+ DAY 27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27

Safety and security are two of our most basic needs, which is probably why the Lord spoke so often about resting our cares and troubles in His hand and finding peace in our faith in Him.

Prayer focus:

- Pray for the peace of the service providers—do not be afraid of those who would try to harm them or of the worries for provision.
- Pray for the peace of the prosecutors and law enforcement—any threats against their families for the work that they do.
- Pray for peace of survivors—those who would try to harm them physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually.

+ DAY 28

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” Ephesians 3:14-21

We are grieving for the women and children in Syria and Iraq who have been subject to human trafficking and sexual slavery by members of ISIS. We must lift up the hundreds of Nigerian girls who have been kidnapped by Boko Haram and face the threat, or reality, of being sold into sex slavery. We trust that the Lord is stronger than ISIS or Boko Haram and can bring a miracle of peace, deliverance and freedom for these women and children. Our faith is in “Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine...”

Prayer focus:

- Swift deliverance for the women and children enslaved by ISIS and Boko Haram, and many other terror groups, that they would be free.
- That God will grant wisdom and success to those seeking to rescue the captives.

+ DAY 29

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:29-31

God is said to give strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak. We work with many excellent shelter and service providers that serve as a conduit for this promise. They offer residential care and essential programming to offer rest and facilitate restoration. Unfortunately, these programs sometimes struggle to fill their homes. Alternatively, survivors have been detained in juvenile detention due to the lack of shelter options

Prayer focus:

- Pray that God will fill shelters with the residents He has selected.
- Pray that God will give wisdom and discernment to those seeking to start a shelter, that it will fill the purpose He has for it.
- That survivors will receive access to services and restoration.

+ DAY 30

"When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers." Proverbs 21:15

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.'" Zechariah 7:9

The legislative session is underway for most state legislators. Many have already drafted and pre-filed bills, and committees are assembling to discern which bills will pass and which won't. The U.S. Congress recently reviewed several bills that will impact justice for trafficking victims. We're relying on prayer, advocacy and the wisdom of our legislators to pass laws that will bring justice and enable restoration for trafficking victims.

Prayer focus:

- Pray for the passage of the Combat Human Trafficking Act, The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act and the Human Trafficking Prevention, Intervention and Recovery Act.
- Pray for the passage and enactment of state laws that further God's plan for justice.



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