

Anti-Human Trafficking **DEVOTIONAL GUIDE**

**A 31-day Prayer and Response
to Human Trafficking**





SA Justice

“On earth as it is in Heaven”

The Salvation Army SA Justice Fight for Freedom action plan against human trafficking is an initiative that originated in the Western Territory of the United States, and has since been adopted by all four United States’ Salvation Army territories.

Currently we have 43 programs and initiatives to fight human trafficking across the U.S., making The Salvation Army a leading direct services provider in fighting human trafficking in the United States.

Please visit our website and social media pages to learn more about how you can get involved in the #FightforFreedom.

We address human trafficking holistically through four main goals: Awareness & Training, Prevention & Outreach, Survivor Services & Recovery, and Partnerships & Advocacy.

Acknowledgements

Thank you for taking the time to invest in prayer and study with our guide. Our prayer is that these devotionals will inspire you to pray for those who have been or are currently being trafficked. We also encourage you to join in your community to fight this injustice. We want to thank the collaboration across The Salvation Army United States four Territories, our International Social Justice Commission team, and the Canada and Bermuda Territory.

Editorial Team

Colonel Janet Munn

Major Sue Dunigan

Major Rachele Lamont

Jamie Manirakiza

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FOREWORD

Thank you for taking the time to invest in prayer and study with our guide. Our prayer is that these devotionals will inspire and motivate you to pray and fight for justice on a deeper more personal level.

This is how we start our year, every year — crying out to the God of justice on behalf of those in danger of, or already experiencing, the horrors of human trafficking. Throughout redemptive history, the LORD God has been attentive to the cries of the oppressed, near to the brokenhearted and saving the crushed in spirit. Jesus Christ personally identifies with those who are poor, naked, hungry, sick and imprisoned (Matthew 25) — all of which describe the experience of human trafficking.

The Holy Spirit is now present in the world, seeking the lost, shining Light in darkness, healing broken hearts.

In the ultimate wisdom of God, a vital means by which God's will is accomplished (on earth as in heaven — where there surely is no trafficking) — is through prayer. As humans join in the intercessions of our Great High Priest, whoever lives to intercede for the world for whom He died, we also join with the Holy Spirit, who groans in intercession, longings for redemption to be fully realized on planet Earth, groans from the heart of God. This is our privilege and responsibility — be aware of the brokenness of the world, we pray for a heightened awareness of human trafficking — and cry out by faith for the mercy and power of God in heaven to touch planet Earth in the darkest places imaginable.

As you read the daily scriptures included here, may your heart be stirred to cry out in prayer — Kingdom of God, come! Will of God be done! On Earth as it is in Heaven! As we seek justice together.

Janet Munn

Colonel

Director

International Social Justice Commission

The Salvation Army





COMFORT

READ

Luke 7:36-50 (NIV)

REFLECT

An invitation to someone's home for a meal or coffee, versus meeting at a restaurant or coffee shop, can be a milestone in developing a stronger relationship. Trust and fellowship are built over a shared meal or snack, served by a welcoming host. Customs regarding hospitality are influenced by ethnicity, country and region. In the Western world, most likely a guest is greeted with a broad smile as the host welcomes them in, followed by a warm handshake or hug, takes any coats or hats, and an invitation to make themselves comfortable. As the saying goes, "Mi casa es tu casa."

Here we see Jesus invited by a Pharisee, Simon, for a meal. Hospitality norms were distinctly prescribed for this time and region. Simon didn't fulfill them, and Jesus tells us what a few of those expectations were: water to wash dusty feet, a kiss, and oil placed on the head for refreshment. Poor Simon blew it. Most notably, he didn't grasp who had just entered his home. The Alpha and the Omega.

Word got out who was coming to Simon's home, and a woman, who the community labeled as "living a sinful life" was among those who came directly to the feet of Jesus. Jesus uses this woman in the story as an example of true faith and a reflection of someone who has experienced His love. What Simon and the pharisees missed in greeting Jesus is taught by the faith of the woman who joins. We see through her pain and tears she worships Jesus and finds healing. We see her tears falling on his feet and with her hair she wipes them along with perfume. Jesus extends the ultimate comfort for her aching soul and life, forgiveness and peace. At the same time, He reveals to Simon the need we all have for forgiveness, and how we can learn something from this woman who has felt the comfort and peace of the ultimate healer. The Comforter has come!

RESPOND

Almost every day a new survivor of human trafficking is identified by a Salvation Army program in the United States. Reach out to a Salvation Army or other anti-human trafficking program in your community to see what items are needed for those they are serving such as personal care items, clothing, or food, that you could collect and donate.

RECEIVE

Our Father, as we begin a new year, I pause to remember the known and unknown victims of human trafficking in our country and around the world. You know their names. You see their hearts. You observe their circumstances. I pray for their freedom, and that one day they will experience your comfort through your unmeasurable love, grace and forgiveness, as I have, by no work of my own, experienced through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains!
For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.*

—Isaiah 49:13 NIV

DAY 2

READ

Isaiah 40:1-3

REFLECT

“Trapped in Babylon”

The 40th chapter of Isaiah opens a new chapter in the lives of God’s people. The book of Isaiah begins to share the promises of God to His people that are exiled to Babylon. They are experiencing another dark chapter in their life because some, or maybe most, wandered away from God’s protective care.

We can trace periods of freedom and persecution with God’s people throughout the Old Testament. Perhaps the logical assumption, even in periods of exile, is that not all the people wandered away from God. So that leaves the question; “Why does suffering happen in our world if there is a Good God?” If we are honest today, we have many of the same questions about how many people find themselves in detestable situations.

The promise in Isaiah 40: 1-3 is that God is a God of “Comfort.” We are reminded that He does not forget His people. We can often see God when we are in times of blessing, but it can be much harder to see God, as a God of comfort when we are experiencing times of distress. If we are in times of distress, the scriptures remind us that God is with us and He will stand beside us through difficult times. May we be encouraged that God never forgets His people. May we remember His promises to never forsake His people, and may we be used as vessels of these truths in some of the darkest places of suffering.

Further on in the book of Isaiah, He challenges God’s people to fight for the oppressed in the 58th chapter. We must continue to fight for those who are victims of human trafficking and against the evil committed by traffickers impacting innocent lives all across the world. May the Lord use us in this fight for justice.

RESPOND

Pray that survivors will have access to safe environments where there will be no shame or fear, and where their hearts and spirits can find recovery, acceptance, peace and love. Pray that survivors will find space and safety to let their voices and stories be heard. To find survivor services within your State visit www.sajustice.us

RECEIVE

Lord you are an awesome God. Your unwavering love extends to all.

Help me never to take your love for granted. Help me to share it with others. Lord help me to see with your eyes those that you’ve put in my path today. Help me to see the unseen things that they may be carrying with them. May their burdens be lighter, their hope be restored, and their souls be encouraged because they see you in the world around them. Lord may you use me today to be a light for someone through my smile, the words I speak and the prayers I lift up. May the people I encounter know they have seen the presence of your love in my life today. Amen.

DAY 3

READ

Psalms 6 (NIV)

REFLECT

It happens many times. Week after week goes by and once again, I feel like I am at the end of my rope. Anxiety and insecurity run through my mind as I consider how to meet deadlines at work, care for my family and juggle responsibilities that are constantly in my daily life. Can you relate? At some time or another, we have all felt distress similar to what the psalmist describes in Psalm 6: weak, worn out, faint, in agony, sorrowful and overwhelmed. Turn on the news or scroll through social media and immediately our stomachs twist in knots as we consider the pain and self-doubt that swirls all around each of us daily. Sometimes the grief we experience is a result of difficult paths that some of us have had to endure. This can add fuel to the fire of shame and uncertainty.

However, in the midst of the anxiety, we can see the hand of God reaching out as a great Comforter. Just as the Psalmist describes, God hears our weeping and offers His tender mercy and unfailing love, without fail. Joy and peace can be found in knowing that God accepts the prayers sincerely offered up to Him.

When we are worn out and weak and unable to put one more foot in front of the other, our God attends to our cries and responds with inexhaustible love, mercy, comfort and acceptance. How has the presence of God brought comfort to you in the midst of pain or sorrow?

RESPOND

Pray for the staff of The Salvation Army SAFE-T program serving in the state of Nebraska. Pray for the victims and survivors of human trafficking that they would know that God hears and sees each and every one of them.

RECEIVE

Lord, we pray for the staff of The Salvation Army SAFE-T program serving throughout the State of Nebraska. We ask that you provide comfort and courage during the hard days. We pray for each survivor that they would feel your gentle and loving peace. Father, we pray for the victims of human trafficking who have not yet found the hope or support they need. Lord, help us all to be ready and equipped to serve when the opportunity presents itself. Amen



HEALING

READ

Luke 13:10-17 (NIV)

REFLECT

For a moment, put yourself in the shoes of the crippled woman described in Luke 13. She lived a life debilitated, uncomfortable and unable to fully stand. Jesus put his hands on her and she was healed after long years of suffering.

In the aftermath of this healing, we see how some of the religious leaders of the day reacted in a disappointing manner. Instead of being amazed by the miracle Jesus performed, they criticized him “working” on the Sabbath. We see Jesus taking the judgment of his critics in stride and having no remorse for the freedom that he gave to the hurting woman that day.

We can all be grateful for Jesus and his compassion. There is no “timeframe” for healing. Jesus always offers love, mercy and redemption. Jesus doesn’t expect us to approach him “the right way,” or on the “right day.” He is available and eager to listen to our needs and work in our lives with grace all day every day.

Is there something you are waiting to bring to Jesus? Talk to Him today. Share with Him your hurts, struggles, and setbacks and open your heart to what He wants to do in your life, regardless of any timeframe. Have no doubt about it, Jesus **wants** to do something amazing for you.

RESPOND

Pray for volunteers who have a heart for anti-trafficking within our church corps and communities. Pray that they would continue to be willing to share anti-trafficking tools, resources, and support for local anti-trafficking efforts.

RECEIVE

Father, we pray that you would bless and strengthen those individuals who are called to be anti-human trafficking survivor voices, allies, and advocates within their community. We know that these individuals have a heart for justice and want to share their passion with others. We pray that they would have strength in the face of hardship, hope when the world feels hopeless, bravery to speak out to all who will listen and resourcefulness in times when resources are lacking. Thank you, Lord, for men and women who volunteer their time and efforts to model how we can reflect your light and be an encouragement to others on the path toward hope. Amen

DAY 5

READ

Isaiah 58 (NIV)

REFLECT

When we think about healing in the context of human trafficking, we often think about the physical and psychological healing of survivors. While that should be our first thought, let's take a moment to remember that whether you are someone who has experienced trafficking and is now fighting to help others, or an advocate ally in the anti-trafficking fight, we must acknowledge the vicarious trauma that fighting human trafficking has on those working to fight against it. For people who are involved in the anti-trafficking movement, they are going to the heart of the issue. They walk alongside survivors as they navigate exiting the life. They walk alongside survivors through frustrating and overwhelming barriers to independence from exploitation. They grieve the painful stories of lived experiences. Advocates sit in the pain, darkness, and trauma on a daily basis. And it affects them.

We sometimes forget that those advocates are people with imperfections, who are also chosen and used by God to fight against human trafficking. In social justice work, there is often a pressure for advocates to go above and beyond - giving ceaselessly, without boundaries, or time to refocus and rejuvenate. The pressure can lead to burnout even for people who took on the role after feeling God's calling on their lives. Yet, in Isaiah 58, we get a clear picture of who of God is and what His heart beats passionately for. He is the God who calls for the type of fasting that loosens the chains of injustice, that sets the oppressed free, and that breaks every chain. He is the Warrior King who seeks out the last, the lost, and the least to draw them close to Him. He is the One who is mighty to save. He is the Restorer of freedom, dignity, and grace.

For those involved in the fight against human trafficking, the work will not always be easy and at times, we will feel overwhelmed. Yet, we can find rest, peace, and hope in who our God is and what His heart beats for. This is His battle. He will be our guide and our source of strength to get up and do it all again tomorrow.

RESPOND

Pray for the STOP-IT team out of Northern Illinois and other advocates around the country involved in the anti-trafficking movement – that they may get their strength and guidance from the Lord.

RECEIVE

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have called us to build your kingdom, to serve your children, and to do the impossible in Your Name. We ask today that you would provide us with the direction to accomplish that to which you have called us, that we would not simply do what we think is best, but that we would seek your guidance and remain grounded in You. Give us the strength to do hard work, not for glory or recognition, but because it is what You have called us to do. Let us be a people of action and of justice. Let it be on earth as it is in heaven.

DAY 6

READ

Psalms 103 (NIV)

REFLECT

In Psalm 103, David provides a list of life situations that, at one time or another, the average person may experience as a natural part of life. Sickness and death, feelings of loneliness and depression, and/or a general sense of not having enough or being enough are a few examples of the realities of life. When we consider these things as inevitable experiences of the human condition, one might feel justified to complain, wallow in self-pity, doubt the goodness of God, or even raise a defiant fist up at God and blame Him for all the harsh realities of life.

Yet, David offers another way of responding to the complexities of life. As we often see in throughout scriptures, David finds joy in shifting his focus amidst pain to praise. No less than seven times in this passage of Scripture does David tell us to “Praise the Lord,” and this is why: God forgives our sins, heals our diseases, redeems us from death, shows us love and compassion, satisfies our desires and gives righteousness and justice—and so much more.

There is no question that the experience of human trafficking and the trauma it inflicts on countless men, women and children should not be part of our human existence. And so, we stand alongside God through our prayer and activism for those who have experienced the harsh realities of human trafficking and the resulting trauma it inflicts, with the call to fight for justice, to call out unjust systems and oppressive structures, and to join as allies alongside those who have experienced trafficking to bring hope and healing for future generations. We trust that God, in His great mercy and love, desires to bind up the wounds and bring complete healing to those who are or have been victims of human trafficking.

RESPOND

We must respond by addressing the needs of someone who has experienced human trafficking by finding ways to comprehensively provide support, and to come alongside survivors as allies, not just meeting their basic needs, but supporting them as a whole person. In Chicago, Hope Strong is working to engage survivors through intensive case management and by providing a drop-in space operated by the STOP-IT Program, as well as Pathway of Hope. These programs both prevent and respond to trafficking.

RECEIVE

Gracious and merciful Heavenly Father, we praise you today for all the ways in which you reach out to those touched by the evil of human trafficking with compassion, concern and healing. Your Word reminds us to put our trust in You for You do care and You are able to do far more than we can ever imagine to restore that which has been broken. Oh Father, keep fresh in our minds the reality that when trouble comes our way, we have a loving and merciful Father that we can look to for help and healing. Help us, Oh Father, to always remember to praise You in all circumstances, for in doing so, our healing will come.


 A woman with long dark hair, wearing a vibrant red long-sleeved dress, is shown in profile from the waist up. She has her hands clasped in prayer and is looking upwards towards a bright, slightly hazy sky. The background consists of tall grass and trees, suggesting an outdoor setting. The image is framed by a light blue and white border.

MERCY

READ

John 8:2-11 New Living Translation (NLT)

REFLECT

How often are we like the Pharisees? Are we quick to judge? Quick to point out the mistakes of our brothers and sisters? Do we use the mistakes of others to justify our own bad behavior and patterns?

In these verses Jesus reminds us that we are all broken and sinners, no one is better than the next. In a society that measures worthiness by good deeds, material possessions and by the number of followers on social media platforms it becomes increasingly competitive and hard to see others as human beings, which are first and foremost broken and flawed. We all carry burdens, mistakes and shame, but it is by the Grace of God that we are covered. It is not something we deserve or can earn.

I've been working with survivors of human trafficking for 8 years and some of my most memorable moments early on in my career was in our first tiny drop-in center. I would constantly ask the women how they liked the drop-in center or if they found it helpful in hopes to gain information that we could use to improve our services. I specifically remember many of the women sharing that the reason they kept coming back was because they did not feel judged and they were continually welcomed back no matter. Some would even go as far to say "You know what I am, right? Do you know what we do?" It was as if they felt unworthy of our services. Or that if we knew what had happened to them, they would be asked to leave.

Those conversations are forever engraved in my head and taught me powerful lessons early on. These women are often pushed on the outskirts of society, judged, and viewed as less than. However, God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves and we are reminded that we all made right before God because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. This is the type of compassion that we are called to demonstrate.

RESPOND

Take some time to reflect on this passage and ask God to reveal His word to you. Think about the last person to whom you extended grace. Could you get better in this area? People come to know Christ by how well we love others. Make it your mission today to love the unlovable, to love those that society is quick to judge. Be like Jesus. We try to live this out at our New Day Drop-in in Philadelphia. We try to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those who need it most.

RECEIVE

Father God we thank you for this reminder of compassion and grace. I commit myself to be your vessel and to extend grace to others just as you have done for me. Father God, I lift every single victim of human trafficking up to You. You know them by name, and you love them. I pray for their recovery and restoration, and I know you have beautiful plans for their lives.

DAY 8

READ

Habakkuk 3:2 (NIV)

REFLECT:

As we look around us, it's easy to be discouraged by all the injustice that is happening. People are being exploited by those who have power; women, children and men are being trafficked into sexual slavery by those who seek to silence the voices of the vulnerable.

The prophet Habakkuk experienced a similar situation. The destruction of Judah was imminent, the Babylonians were at their front door, even their own leaders were turning away from God. Yet Habakkuk had hope. He remembered all the great deeds the Lord had done in the past: the exodus from Egypt, crossing the Red Sea; being fed and rescued time and again. As he looked back at the ways God had rescued His people, his faith was strengthened; he was able to believe that God would once again repeat His mighty acts on behalf of His people.

We can experience the same faith and hope that Habakkuk did, if we look back and think about the mighty things God has done in our own lives. He has saved us from sin. He has rescued many of us from situations of physical or psychological captivity and exploitation. He has raised up warriors around the world who are ready to fight injustice wherever they find it. Our voices are being heard!

While it may sometimes seem like evil is winning, we know the end of the story. We know that God's side wins. He will have the ultimate victory over all injustice in our world. He will repeat His deeds in our day. And He will show His great mercy.

RESPOND

Today, may you explore how to become and ally with survivors around the world and in your community. There are various groups across the U.S. that are led by survivors of trafficking and allies. The Salvation Army's Portland, Maine drop-in center, is a place that seeks to partner with many such groups to ensure that survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation are at the center of the conversation about programming, outreach and advocacy in the State. We encourage you to find ways in your region to stand with Survivors to fight this form of oppression. One way that we can continue to fight for the oppressed is through advocacy, policy reform, and education in our communities, today may you find ways to engage in becoming an ally in fighting human trafficking.

RECEIVE

Pray for those who are experiencing injustice today. Pray that survivors may receive all that they need to enable them to reach out to others who are now experiencing the effects of sex-trafficking. Pray for God to reveal ways in which you can join in the fight for justice going on in your community.

DAY 9

READ

Psalms 25:5-7 (NIV)

REFLECT

I'm sure you've heard of the saying "You can't teach an old dog new tricks!" I will admit that as we get older it can become more difficult to learn new ways of doing things. But as David asks the Lord to guide him and teach him, we too must have a teachable spirit. This does not mean we have to be scholars, but it does mean we must allow God to show us His ways.

When we approach God with a humble and teachable spirit, He pours out His mercy and love upon us. He forgives us and gives us the guidance to continue. As practitioners or those seeking to serve survivors of human trafficking, it is important to be humble and to learn from those who have experienced exploitation. We must be teachable, and open to, becoming allies alongside victims and survivors, we are molded in the process of helping those in dire circumstances. We learn about resiliency and hope. Through humility we can be reflective of Christ's love for His people, through action we can demonstrate his call for justice, and through out walk with Him, we can show mercy.

RESPOND

In Western Pennsylvania, we are providing direct case management to victims of human trafficking as well as assisting counties in building-up service coordination for when victims are identified in their communities. Many of the people we support through case management have gone through so much trauma that they begin to lose hope. As we work with them, we show them that there is an unconditional support for them. We seek to demonstrate the love of Christ to each person we encounter so that they see their worth and can experience mercy, love and respect.

RECEIVE

Pray that God might reveal to you an areas of your life in which you are holding back from him, that you can surrender those areas of your life which may be preventing you from receiving God's mercy and love. Pray for a teachable spirit. Pray for humility and to seek God's guidance in how to effectively reach those who are suffering in our midst, so they may receive our help and the mercy of Christ.



COMPASSION

READ

Luke 10: 25-37 (NIV)

REFLECT

Awareness is a prerequisite to compassion and compassion is vital to transformative acts of mercy. The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates three different types of human responses to awareness of suffering, and can shed light on our community response to our brothers and sisters who are being trafficked. The Bible does not explicitly say whether the first two men felt compassion for the beat up man, and simply walked by, too busy to stop and help, or if they just didn't care. If we assume that they may have felt compassion, what does that say about their inaction at the very least? Sometimes, we feel compassion on those we see suffering but we cross the road, or turn away, hoping to move on with our individual responsibilities. The third man, a Samaritan, reminds us that we have everything we need to show mercy and to respond to those who are suffering around us. Maybe the first two men who passed reflect the majority of society today, whereby, we are too overwhelmed by all the suffering we see in our world and simply keep walking, trying to ignore the very person next to us that needs our help. However, Jesus invites us to move from a state of awareness and inaction, to being ministers of mercy. The Good Samaritan helped the man heal his wounds, he used his animal for transportation, and resources to pay for the man's shelter. Interestingly, he was able to help and yet go on with his responsibilities. How can we translate this to our own lives?

RESPOND

What gifts has God given you to minister healing and restoration to survivors? Have you considered that your own pain or experiences of injustice may qualify you to help, like the Samaritan? Consider joining a local outreach to vulnerable populations and learning what's being done in your area to fight human trafficking. The Lord will provide everything you need, including time! In New Jersey we are developing a comprehensive response to human trafficking. We've served survivors from our soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters and case management. Please join us in prayer as we ask The Lord for guidance and resources to minister healing and restoration to those we encounter.

RECEIVE

Lord, my heart breaks for my brothers and sisters and now you've called me to action, show me what I can do to be a beacon of light, hope and mercy to those who are experiencing exploitation.

DAY 11

READ

Exodus 34:5-7 (NIV)

REFLECT

We are reminded in this scripture how our Yahweh God is a merciful Father, full of compassion and hope for a new day and way—showing His love and forgiveness even when we mess up. After he had given Moses and the Israelites the 10 commandment, written by God Himself, the people began worshiping idols and were already turning from Him to worthless things. Moses reacted in anger towards them, and in haste, destroyed the tablets written by Heaven's hands. "When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain" (Exodus 32:19).

Moses messed up and the Israelites messed up, but in the Scripture we find Moses (on behalf of the Israelites) was invited into God's Presence once again, where he received a do-over, and was given the 10 commandments once again. God comes down to him, stands with him and embraces him in heaven's cloud of mercy and grace. We all mess up and we all need the Fathers mercy and compassion. In love He wants us to come close to Him receive his compassion anew. He will forgive, and hand us not a fresh empty slate, but one with purpose and hope. The mention of His name and the embrace of His love is a legacy of compassion and hope for all.

RESPOND

The Salvation Army in Philadelphia ventured out to run a full-time drop in center on Kensington Avenue. The center is a safe, trauma informed, welcoming and non-judgmental space for women suffering from sex-trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia.

Strategically located in the heart of the neighborhood, a simple sign on the door reading, "women only drop-in: food, clothing, toiletries" identifies the center, which is open during the day and two late nights per week, when other service agencies are not available. Staff work to build rapport with individuals who have had their trust violated and are trained to look for human trafficking red flags, as well as how to address the women's specialized psychological, social, emotional and physical needs. In addition to the physical drop-in center space, The Salvation Army provides an array of case management services. Staff, interns and volunteers are also trained in trauma-informed care and are a consistent presence in the community. News of the center travels largely by word of mouth and through street outreach teams.

RECEIVE

Pray for those who are receiving care and compassion in places like The New Day Drop in Center. Ask the Lord to bless those in these places of care. Pray that they will be safe and that they will have the provisions needed. Pray that the God's Word and forgiveness will bring about a transformation from painful trauma to hope through compassion.

DAY 12

READ

Psalms 86:14-16, NLT

REFLECT

It was only a dream, yet it lingered, and though I awakened to a new day, it still seemed real. I was about to speak at an event only to find myself at the podium, speechless. Although I tried to speak, not a word came over my lips. Familiar faces mercifully watched the spectacle, at loss for words. I had failed the sole task—to speak. Relieved, I slowly returned to an awakened state. It was only a dream!

PEARL Essence is an outreach program to illicit massage parlors in Greater New York, channeling the message that survivors are Purposed, Empowered, Appreciated, Respected and Loved. Visiting illicit massage parlors in Brooklyn, NY, can seem unreal, almost like being transported into the cruel reality of a bad dream. This ministry leaves one internally and externally speechless. In debriefing sessions, as we recall the eyes of survivors and traffickers, we wonder where they are now and how they are coping with life. For some of them maybe "We" mean nothing to them, "But you, O Lord..." stand in the gap, your compassionate suffering being the condition for your sacrifice in saving us. "But you, O Lord..." empower the outreach team with compassion to be present in person and in spirit, while we extend a gift during outreach such as nail polish or lipstick, symbolizing hope as an invisible ribbon of God's Love towards an alternative future.

The Psalmist has earlier established "You alone are God" (86:10), immediately followed by a cry for personal and corporate purity, before going on to cry out to God for justice. Following God into this ministry becomes a two-way street, it has potential to equally transform outreach teams, survivors and traffickers alike, as the ground is completely level at the cross of Jesus, with an invitation to bravely storm the forts of darkness in our own lives and in the difficult places where survivors stand.

RESPOND

God's lovingkindness is eternal and utterly real. If you have tasted and seen God's love in your life, would you consider travelling in your mind into an illicit massage parlor? Would you consider turning a speechless Gethsemane moment into an obedient whisper joining the Psalmist? "*But you, O Lord...filled with unfailing love and faithfulness...give your strength...save....*" How would you act justly, love mercy and walk humbly (Micah 6:8) with God today in order to influence change? Would you accept the invitation to compassionately suffer with Christ, if even for a few moments, considering how God's heart is bleeding for the lost in this world? Will you speak up or will you remain in the state of this world as in a bad dream, speechless?

RECEIVE

"But you, O Lord..." have mercy on us. Lead us into willingness to share in your compassion, that our direct services to survivors may be marked by the victory of your blood-stained suffering, death and resurrection. We pray for the sustainability of the PEARL Essence outreach. Strengthen your servants with compassion towards new resurrections in this broken and beautiful world. AMEN.



DELIVERANCE

READ

Mark 5:1-20 (NIV)

REFLECT

In Matthew 6:13, Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father, ... deliver us from evil.”

In this time of relativity, what exactly is evil? Well, practically speaking, it is a lot of things. Biblically speaking, evil is anything that rejects, opposes or keeps us from the goodness of God. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were living by design. Tempted and lured by lies, they rejected the eternal, life-giving presence, provision and holy love of God. Choosing to live outside of the rule and reign of God’s kingdom, evil was set in motion.

In Mark’s description of the demon possessed man, we see the oppressive and possessive nature of evil. Separated from God, the madman suffers alienation, isolation, self-mutilation, dehumanization, nakedness and bondage. Clearly evil, unhinged and terrifyingly strong, it is no wonder he was banished, shackled and left to die in a dark cave amidst pigs and the dead. For the Jews, this was a horror story. In fact, they passed law upon law to protect themselves from being threatened or tarnished by unclean spirits, people, places and pigs.

In surrendered dependence upon the Father, and filled with the Holy Spirit, the power and authority of Jesus triumphs over evil. Moved by compassion, God sends his Son, Jesus across the lake to respond to the wails of the hopeless Gentile. In the presence of God, the man humbly bows at the feet of Jesus and a legion of evil spirits tremble, beg and flee. The tormented man is delivered from evil.

In and through Christ, the holy love of God expels evil and sin and cleanses us from the inside out. Reborn, renewed, redeemed and reconciled to God, we are delivered FROM the power of evil and delivered TO the freedom found only in Christ.

RESPOND

Today evil abounds all around us, on many levels. We are each called to the battlefield, to confront evil wherever it lurks. Only through the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit and covered by the blood of Christ can we hope to defeat this vicious enemy. Human Trafficking in all its many forms is truly in the heart of the “enemy’s camp”. Around the globe there are millions of people ensnared in this travesty. But there are also efforts to come alongside victims and survivors to provide resources and services to offer hope and a way out.

RECEIVE

Our Father, deliver us, our families, communities and nations from the power of evil. Humble us in surrendered dependence to Your Will and Your way in our lives and the world. Anoint and saturate us with your Spirit. Give us ears to hear those who weep out on the margins and to respond with the overflow of your holy love in and through us. Move us with your compassion to cross boundaries, cultures and lakes to be messengers of deliverance. In the power and authority of Jesus, let us come boldly into Your throne room to pray with expectant hope: Our Father, deliver us from evil. Amen.

DAY 14

READ

1 Samuel 2:1-3

REFLECT

These three verses reflect Hannah's Thanksgiving prayer. Giving thanks is an essential part of prayer. In every address to God it is important to express gratitude to Him as the benefactor of our every need. In the Bible 'horn' means power, glory, strength, royal authority, enabling power, honor, dignity, and dominion. To have one's horn exalted denotes prosperity, triumph and victory! Hannah is immensely grateful and rejoices that lifting high the horn, she draws her strength, honor and dignity from the Lord and delights in the freedom she has through Him. As sons and daughters of the King, we are automatically clothed with a supernatural strength that radiates dignity, honor and worth. The evil one wants nothing more than to devour us with his lies by leading us to believe that we are not worthy, however, we have victory in Christ! Just like Hannah, may you also be victorious. The enemy will not prevail over you. May every shame go away. May your horn be exalted through salvation and victory!

RESPOND

Florida has accomplished great strides in anti-trafficking initiatives. As third in the nation for human trafficking activity, the state is working tirelessly toward building a system of continuum of care for the victims and survivors liberated from this crime. Emergency services are crucial, however, the aftercare of obtaining education, securing a safe and stable place to live, transportation and viable, sustainable employment remain high on the list of needs.

RECEIVE

My Father, I come to you with a heart of thanksgiving. Thank you because you are my King. Help me to remember and reclaim that I am your precious son or daughter, an heir to Your eternal throne. My identity and strength are through You and who You say I am! Let me lift high the horn and delight in the freedom You give me. Clothe me with a supernatural strength that radiates dignity, honor, and worth. Help me to remember the source of my identity and strength is your identity and strength. The focus of my faith is your faithfulness. The source of my security is your everlasting love. Amen.

DAY 15

READ

Psalms 32 (NIV)

REFLECT

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." Psalm 32:7

What a profound statement full of hope we see in this Psalm. David is sharing his heart. Even during trials and struggles he can declare that the Lord is his refuge. As he hides in the Lord, he will be surrounded by "songs of deliverance."

How many times do we feel trapped, hopeless and in need of an answer? This Psalm is a declaration that the Lord is our deliverer and that we can find hope in Him. Do you find yourself or those you love in a situation where they are feeling in bondage or far from God? This chapter reminds us that we can trust that Jesus will surround us with "songs of deliverance." Seek the Lord now and know that He will meet you and desires to give you freedom and hope. "Whom the son sets free, he is free indeed" John 8:36

RESPOND

Pray for the women of HavenATL in Atlanta, GA who are coming to the drop-in center every week. They are powerful and strong women who are working towards their goals and attending counseling and case management and classes to take steps towards healing in their lives. Pray for the staff to continue to have strength and encouragement as they serve and dedicate their time to meet the needs in the community.

RECEIVE

Lord, we pray that You will be our hiding place and our refuge—that we will know, that as we come to You, You are always ready to surround us with "Songs of Deliverance." We pray for those who are in the midst of trafficking and exploitation — that you will release hope into the most hopeless places, that you will allow us to be Your hands and feet to those who are seeking a way out.

READ

John 14 NIV

REFLECT

The good news — no the great news — about Jesus is that in Him we have a hope that triumphs fear! Jesus restores a hope that offers freedom from our past, the possibility to live out a full life today without fear, and to eventually enjoy a life with Jesus for all eternity. Capturing that hope, General John Gowans penned these lyrics: “He came to give us life and life in all its fullness. He came to set his people free.” Freedom from the past to enjoy the present with the certainty about the future. Now that’s hope! That’s my hope!

But wait! But we must recognize that’s not the experience for everyone. Many have troubled hearts. Many are afraid. Victims and survivors of human trafficking often experience fear, oppression, and a desire for freedom that may seem too far away to imagine. Hope may not close enough for them to see, let alone grasp. They need help. They need a messenger. They need to be able to see a future free of exploitation.

The message of Jesus in John 14 is that hope conquers fear and that there is hope beyond. Beyond what? In John 16, Jesus admits life may be difficult and troubles and challenges will be normal. But Jesus states he has overcome the world meaning that a troubled heart and fear do not define us as a people. Jesus gives hope beyond our past. We all have a past. Life with Jesus moves us passed our past to embrace and enjoy the full “fearless” life he came to give. We all have a present. We can only live in the moment. Jesus gives hope in the present to endure and overcome fear. He has conquered pain, sorrow, and regret. We all have a future. He gives hope into a heavenly future, one without oppression and fear. John 14 describes this future hope as Jesus preparing a place for us but first, through the comfort and strength of the Holy Spirit, he gives us the ability to live in the present.

Be a living example of hope without fear and live to reveal for others a hope that goes beyond our past and present.

RESPOND

Followers of Jesus are called to be ambassadors — “God with skin on” — bringing the message of a higher authority. That aptly describes the ministry of anti-human trafficking work as we bring the light of Jesus to dark places. Find someone living in darkness. Show them the hope that goes beyond. Be their help. Be their messenger. Show them the Rescuer. Be God with skin on.

RECEIVE

In the name of Jesus I ask for strength when I am weak, courage when I am afraid, trust when I have trouble, compassion for those in crisis, an army for those who are trafficked, and a heart for those you love. Amen.

Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

—John 14:27



HONOR

DAY 17

READ

1 Samuel 2:8 (NIV)

REFLECT

In a broken world, life often goes awry, and we find ourselves feeling lonely, abandoned, forgotten and discarded. Whether it is trauma, loss, rejection, disaster or even doubt, it is easy to wonder where God is in these moments. We feel as though we are on the ash heap, or as the New Living Translation states “the garbage dump.”

In the book of Exodus, we read the story of God’s people. They endured years of abuse, mistreatment and oppression at the hands of the Egyptians. The people of Israel spent forty intense, hot, dry years in the wilderness—forty years of wandering. They had been promised a land of wonder, flowing with milk and honey, but in the wilderness, they hadn’t even a drop of water to drink.

The wilderness is never easy. But God has purposes for us in the wilderness that cannot be accomplished by staying in Egypt. The wilderness is a place of danger and vulnerability. When things seem messy and chaotic, we may find it difficult to listen to the voice of hope. But the wilderness is the doorway to the Promised Land. It is fertile ground for God to come through in the most profound and miraculous ways with signs and wonders that will fit us for the journey ahead.

When we look at the great heroes of the Bible, we see that the wilderness is a place of preparation. In 1 Samuel Hannah has felt discarded because of her many years of infertility. Desperate, she cries out to God and He hears her cry, giving her a son, Samuel. David spent time in the wilderness before becoming King. In Exodus, Moses was banished from Egypt and lived as a simple shepherd leading the flocks to the far side of the wilderness, where he saw the burning bush and was called to save Israel from the Egyptians. And Joseph was abandoned, enslaved and imprisoned before becoming one of the most powerful men of his generation. Yes, it is a place of danger and vulnerability, but it is also a place of covenant and power, a place of wonder. It is where, in God’s hands, intended evil becomes eventual good.

RESPOND

Those who are working in our anti-trafficking programs across the globe need an extra measure of strength as well as support and care. Many may feel like they are wandering in an endless wilderness of despair as they fight this oppression. They may be suffering from forms of vicarious trauma. It is important for systems to be in place for self-care and encouragement.

RECEIVE

Lord, thank You that even during times when we feel we are in the wilderness You are with us. I pray that you would draw near to those who are working on the front lines, fighting trafficking, and show you are there, even amid trials and setbacks. I pray that you would release hope and strength to those who need it most.

DAY 18

READ

Psalms 50 (NIV)

REFLECT

“Call on Me in a day of trouble; I will rescue you and you will honor Me.”

Years ago, the late Christian contemporary artist Keith Green wrote a song entitled “To Obey is Better Than Sacrifice.” He goes on to write: **“I want hearts of fire , not your prayers of ice And I’m coming quickly to give back to you According to what you have done.”** It reminds us that we tend to get our understanding of what God expects of us confused with what God really desires of us. Our confusion comes from our own selfish ambitions or believing that just going through the motions is enough for God.

In Psalm 50, Asaph is speaking to Israel. He is telling them that God does expect us to make sacrifices of our time, talents and resources but more importantly, our ethics and attitudes need to be pure and honorable as we make them. Along with our service and giving, God expects a few things to go along with them such as compassion, mercy, love, gratitude, passion and devotion. Israel was lacking that spiritual obedience factor in their sacrifices. They were not reliant on God and were living double lives dripping with hypocrisy. Were they truly honoring God in what they were doing? I would have to say “No.” It was half-hearted at best.

Verse 15 says to call on the Lord in times of trouble. He promises to come to the rescue. It should come naturally to us, His children, to honor Him with an attitude of gratitude and to be obedient to our Savior. He hears and answers our prayers when we come to Him with wholehearted devotion.

Human Trafficking is a darkness that is so evil that many do not or cannot recognize it in their own backyards. So, in context with this, what should we do to be obedient to God’s call to battle this war against the darkness? We are to honor God by humbling ourselves and recognize that we need someone else to save us. We cannot do it alone. Caring about others is great, but even better is to call on God for help to deliver those who are ensnared in trafficking. We honor God when we call on Him for the sake of others, then act as He directs.

RESPOND

Maryland is one of the few states that has not adopted a Safe Harbor law. The Safe Harbor Law protects children under the age of 18 from being prosecuted for the actions that are forced upon them in the sex trafficking industry. Please pray for continued policy reforms such as Safe Harbor, and other public policy that will protect victims of trafficking, and punish the perpetrators.

RECEIVE

Father, As we devote this time to call on You, may we truly seek Your will in our lives. Show us Your mercy and grace as we strive to offer ourselves to You, with thanksgiving and obedience, for who You are. In all that we do, allow us to honor You. Amen



RECOVERY

READ

Luke 7:11-17 (NIV Translation & MSG Paraphrase)

REFLECT

The writer doesn't hold any punches in Luke 7:12 when he says that "a dead person" was being carried out of the city of Nain. Along with a great crowd was his mother, a now vulnerable widow with no more children. Jesus' heart broke for the grieving mother. He "saw her" and He would have none of it! With a few words, He raised this son from the dead and "gave him back to his mother." Jesus saw brokenness, walked into it, and changed it. Each step was like a single note in a song of praise to God the Father.

Can you imagine the uncontrollable shriek of joy that came from this woman, the tight embrace she gave her son and the utter gratitude in her eyes as she looked at Jesus and whispered, "Thank you! Thank you!" I imagine that she could barely breathe or stand. Jesus had saved two lives that day and the recovery of this son impacted every person present. "God has come. He's back," the crowd said. Jesus turned a funeral into a procession of love, turned loss into recovery, and turned hurt to redemption. The town went out for a burial and encountered God Himself. Perhaps there was a young woman in that crowd who thought to herself, "if Jesus can do that, maybe, just maybe, He can help me, too."

RESPOND

In the California South Division, there is a huge and growing industry of human trafficking. With the growing need, there are Salvation Army programs such as Thatiana's Home and others in Orange County where advocates are working to help women, youth and men recover and leave the abuses of human trafficking. These programs meet the needs of all people without discrimination of national origin, identity, or religion—all in the name of the God who Comforts the broken hearted.

RECEIVE

To the coffin — touching God, we say thank You that You see all. You do not turn Your face from evil but look it straight in the eye and say, "No!" You see the vulnerable and forsake none who look to You for help. You fight for justice and invite us to our heritage of standing in the gap and rebuilding broken down cities. Help us to never stop fighting until each person finds recovery and a place in the family of God. Touch the coffin of human trafficking and destroy it for good. Touch my spirit that I may see. Touch my hands that I may prevent injustice. May our cities sing, "God has come. He's back!" In the name of the God who interrupts funerals, we ask you to interrupt us once again. Amen.

READ

Jeremiah 22:2-4 (NLT) (NIV)

REFLECT

The Prophet Jeremiah was known as the Weeping Prophet. Can you blame him? Given Jeremiah was tasked with prophesying of Jerusalem's destruction due to their blatant disobedience against God and disregard for their covenanted relationship – it is literally no surprise Jeremiah felt a little melancholy during his ministry to a broken nation. Jeremiah 22:2-4 features a swift and powerful rebuke against the king of Judah, his officials, and essentially everyone who entered the city gates. Bust out your best THUS SAITH THE LORD and get on Jeremiah's level because the word he drops is heavy and God's command is clear:

1. Attend to matters of justice.
2. Set things right between people.
3. Recover victims from their exploiters.
4. Don't take advantage of the homeless, the orphans, the widows.
5. Stop the murdering! (Read: do not be content to let those innocent, vulnerable, and weak die).

These age-old prophetic instructions were given to make clear God's heart for justice and His regard for those marginalized while simultaneously calling those with political power (or any power for that matter) to rule just the same. In God's Upside-Down Kingdom, a king is not great because he rules with a scepter and sword, but with justice, mercy and a commitment to those who are too often pushed aside—unlike us—are unwanted, and forgotten.

Jeremiah makes clear that an unwillingness to act and operate otherwise will only lead to the complete devastation and ruin of that place and those in power.

RESPOND

As The Salvation Army, we move and operate with a strategic mission to meet human needs in Jesus' name. It's not by might nor power that enables us to advance towards righting what is wrong with the social construct of our day. It is by the Spirit that we take ground in doing justice, ending sexual exploitation and treating everyone that is unlike us better than we treat ourselves. Individuals who are forced, tricked or coerced into the sex-trade and labor industries believe they have no other choice. Pray the Salvation Army would continue to strengthen its relationships with people and places where these evils are occurring so that new doors of opportunity can be opened. God, would you do more than we could ever ask for or imagine.

RECEIVE

God, give us a heart like Jeremiah – a heart that is soft to be touched both by the great need of those around us and by the Spirit's power to influence us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Let us sit in the discomfort of our own privilege as you give us eyes to see how we can do what is right and just. Help us to be influencers. Give us words to persuade those in power to new ways of thinking and acting and help turn the ears of those who can affect change in legislation and policy in our cities that prevent women, children, and all vulnerable adults from being exploited.

READ

Psalms 71:1-3

REFLECT

Psalms 71:1-3, provides us with hope that God is a God of refuge for the oppressed, he is a God who is capable of saving, he is a rock, a fortress. When evil surrounds us, this Psalm provides hope that God has the power to save. God is righteous and will never forsake us. He sees us and values each person more than we could ever comprehend. He will help us when we are in pain. He remains the same when we are down trodden and think no one will love us, or maybe know one has ever shown us real love. God is our refuge. Even though we cannot see Him now, His Spirit is always with us.

When we think about the people who are victims of human trafficking, my hope is that they would experience God's liberation, that he would use us as His people to fight for those who are oppressed by traffickers, while also pray for God to comfort them. For the survivors of trafficking it is our prayer that they will find peace and strength in God, and that they will be able to seek and find the help and resources that they need, however, God calls us to be the hands and feet on this Earth, it is our call through faith, to produce actions, to fight for resources for those who do not have any, and to work to fight ongoing injustice.

Reading these Bible verses in the context of human trafficking we are encouraged to continue to increase awareness and education on the topic of trafficking in our communities, as there is so much misunderstanding that leads to a lack of identification of victims and survivors in our midst. Everyone has a different understanding of trafficking that is sometimes influenced by their culture and background. We must educate our communities and be willing to share more information with others.

RESPOND

In California the Salvation Army has developed resources and informational materials in several languages. In San Francisco there is a working group focusing on outreach to the Chinese community. Take time today to share information with those who are vulnerable in your community, focus today on those who may be from southeast Asia trafficked to the United States and pray we can bring resources and light for those suffering a lack of freedom within our borders.

RECEIVE

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you again for this opportunity to work on anti-human trafficking ministry. I pray that the people who are waiting to be recovered that they will have hope and not give up, and I pray for the people who are in recovery will find you because You love us more than we can imagine. I continue to pray for my community for their awareness on trafficking. Lord, please give me strength and guide me when I help my community. I thank You for Your righteousness. In Jesus name I pray, Amen!

RESTORATION



READ:

Luke 8:42-48

REFLECT

Call her Jane Doe. She was a woman with no identity known to us. For all we know society used her, pitied her, abused her, lied to her, ignored her and for sure dismissed her. To prove it, no one noticed her. The disciples, the godly or spiritual people in the entourage around Jesus, did not see her. She blended in the crowd the day we read about in Luke 8. Does she remind you of someone? You? A relative? A client or parishioner? Most likely you can empathize with her. At least so far in the story. We read in verse 43, “no one could heal her.” Not only did she go unnoticed, she was a hopeless case—beyond the help of doctors—left to bleed to death, essentially.

Just like so many at wit’s end who “hit the bottom,” without any other resources, she reached out to Jesus for the help and healing that would make her whole. She reached out — not to shake hands, receive a hug, or even for any recognition. She didn’t even look at his face. She was so down that from behind him, she reached out to Jesus with all she could to touch the hem of his cloak. Immediately he restored Jane Doe. No longer was she a nobody. Jesus called her “daughter” and affirmed her that her faith healed her. If you are like this woman at the start of the story, what is keeping you from being like her at the end? Daughter, in faith today, be restored into the child of God He created you to be.

RESPOND

Forever Found and Second Story, are Anti Human Trafficking efforts in Simi Valley, CA – Ventura County. Pray for their education program, freedom advocacy program, law enforcement partnership, survivor mentor program, and awareness raising and training. More information can be found at: <https://foreverfound.org/>.

RECEIVE

Lord, may I have ears to hear what the Lord is saying and eyes to see what the Lord is doing in the lives of those around me. May I have a mind to learn what the Lord is teaching and a heart to love the Lord and my neighbor as myself. Amen. (pp. 132, *Just: imagine* by Roberts and Strickland)

DAY 23

READ

Isaiah 49:21-22 (NIV)

REFLECT

Do you like rhetorical questions? Be honest! Well, No one does, especially when they drudge up thoughts that leave us feeling crowded, confused or defeated. Often, I find the verbal imagery in Isaiah is antagonizing me to see underneath a layer of complex simplicity.

“It’s impossible,” If not for Grace!

“This is too much for me to bear,” If not for Power!

“There’s no coming back from this,” If not for the Resurrection!

The complex simplicity of God! Without means, without numbers, with no regard for the complex, God is bringing the dead back to life, the broken are renewed and men and women are being saved in impossible circumstances by the simple Love of God. This happens with no regard for my finite thoughts. It happens so we can see none other than the One who makes all things new.

No subtle explanation can be made of our King. He is wonderful, strong, fierce, complex and simple. To the church this is astonishing. To the lost He might seem distant. To the saved, He is fantastic. To the broken, it begs a Physician. To those who are lost, He is hope. In a dark state of mind, He is pure light. Restoration is the pure, wonderful work of God. We count on the promises of our Sovereign Lord. We celebrate victory when He restores the disenfranchised. We ask Him to send us in as banners of mercy to those who are hurting.

RESPOND

As I drive down Florida Ave, she pops out of the shadows. In the corner of my eye I see at least two more women crossing the street. I see the car next to me slow down more than usual, he looks tempted to stop. For the first three months in Hemet, CA I thought I was imagining it. But the truth is, I didn’t want it to be so. Commerical sexual exploitation is normal in this area. I am glad that God has given me the eyes to see it. But I must admit, and maybe this sounds familiar: “It’s too much for me to conquer. Too broken, to be fixed.” But God, the God of all creation, is in charge of all things. The impossible is possible for those that believe. Pray thoughtfully for divine wisdom and revelation, so that we can receive power to go to battle with this evil. I can’t do it on my own, so I pray that God will guide me and all of us in this fight.

RECEIVE

With trust, we pray. Lord of all, Mighty King. Redeemer, help us to see your words with holy imagery. As we picture restoration of all people, help us to understand that You are Sovereign—that your timing is boundless—that your grace is perfect love. We pray for justice and anchor our hope in You. In Jesus name. Amen

DAY 24

READ

Psalms 126: 1-6 (The Passion Translation)

REFLECT

Our God is in the business of making things new. Regardless of what our stories have looked like, where we’ve come from, what has been done to us or even what we’ve done to ourselves, God wants to reach into the dark places and make us new.

As humans we can’t help but compare ourselves to others, from our outside appearances, to our current financial situations, to the personas we try to portray on social media and even to our stories. We sometimes hear the testimony or story of someone else’s journey and because their story’s “worse” than ours, we assume that ours doesn’t matter anymore. We ask questions like, “Their stories are so much more painful than ours, why can’t I just move on from my stuff?” Or, “I’ve been a Christian so long, why does this still hurt?” Friends, comparison ruins everything it touches. Even if your pain is different than someone else’s, it’s still real — and it still matters.

When we trivialize our stories and wounds, the enemy of our soul can use that stuffing of sadness to distract us and create distance between us and The Lord.

Your pain is real. God sees it, and He wants to make you new as well. The thing that holds you captive, the sadness or sin that keeps you up at night, the you that you would die to keep secret—that is the you that Jesus went to the cross for. He looks at that thing, the sin or weakness or wound or failure and instead of turning away in disgust like we would assume He would, Jesus reaches into his reservoir of grace and forgiveness and mercy, and without any iota of judgment Jesus says, “I can clean that out if you’ll let me.” And as we extend our darkest parts to Him, he heaps palmfuls of healing until all that is left is His presence and kindness.

These are modern miracles. This is what The Lord has done and what He wants to continue to do in our lives, no matter what. Will you let Him do that in your life today?

RESPOND

Brave Global is a campaign that invites God’s people to reach out to the most vulnerable girls with a message of empowerment in every community across the world. God has a plan to redeem everything and everyone. Every at-risk girl has a future and a hope that is bright with possibilities. We are going to be brave enough to tell them that and then to journey with them to fight for their freedom and their future.” For more information on BRAVE GLOBAL: braveglobal.org

RECEIVE

Lord today we pray your protection on all those in the foster care system who are at risk of being trafficked. Please protect them from those who would prey on their vulnerabilities. Guide us to take action and reach out in our communities to make a difference in their lives.



RESPECT

READ

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)

REFLECT

When we meet people with our preconceived ideas, we can block meaningful exchanges. This story of two sisters is so familiar to us that we often adopt that stereotype thinking: 'both women should have been in the kitchen preparing the meal for Jesus!' Martha complained, but Jesus protected Mary's choice of making time to be a disciple, sitting at His feet, listening to His teaching. Martha was concerned about what others might think about her sister: a woman, behaving like a male disciple! One thing was needed. Mary stayed still and listened, showed respect.

Jesus' comment honored Mary: she was considered, welcomed, on the same level as His other male disciples. Jesus took time for her. The respect was reciprocal, which is what happens when we deliberately make time to listen. Jesus went against cultural norms and created new possibilities. Today, in our efforts to meet with victims and survivors of Human Trafficking, we can show respect, welcome them, and demonstrate love. In giving them respect and developing transformative relationships as experts of their lived experiences, we can open doors for new possibilities. And in these relationships, the grace of Jesus is poured out. We too can challenge cultural norms. We too can include those who perhaps beforehand were excluded, we must start by showing respect.

REMEMBER

Anna*, a survivor of Human Trafficking originally from Hungary, who now works as a social worker for The Salvation Army in another country returned to Budapest for a week's visit. She found herself in the company of The Salvation Army colleagues, the State Secretary for European Affairs, a police representative and a colleague from IOM to share her story. It was in complete contrast to what Anna had experienced a decade before in the same city, where women are often not highly considered. Please pray for Edina Toth (AHT Contact Person, Hungary) and for all those who work in Hungary to raise awareness of human trafficking, for The Salvation Army's 'House of New Beginning', and for training courses.

RESPOND

Take time to listen to someone today—act counter-culturally.

Loving Lord be with all who are in personal contact with survivors of Human Trafficking. Help them to listen, change stereotype thinking, and welcome each person into a grace-filled environment. Amen.

DAY 26

READ

Judges 4:4-24 (NV)

REFLECT

In this passage we see that Israel was under the domination of Jabin, king of Canaan (v.20). Concretely, this meant that an entire population was reduced to slavery: the loss of their identity, their freedom, the exploitation of their resources and were victims of violence and tyranny.

Debra was directly affected and concerned. She was a judge in Israel, a position that was more like being the head of government. When the opportunity presented itself, she stood up, and made the courageous decision to lead her people to attack their oppressor and the general of his army, Sisera. (v. 6-10)

Jaël, on the other hand, had a very different position. In fact, she was not directly concerned with the oppression suffered by the people of Israel. Her people, the Kenites lived in peace and in good terms with King Jabin (v. 17). However, she and her husband moved away from their people and were now close to the battlefield. Even though her husband was loyal to the Canaanites, Jael was not. After the Israelites defeated his troops in battle, Sisera fled to what he thought was the tent of a loyal supporter. Jael wisely uses this opportunity as he came to her tent for refuge. She risked her life, but then she used her position to entrap and kill him.

The freedom of the people of Israel was made possible by Debora's courage and Jael's solidarity with Israel.

RESPOND:

In our day and age, may think that we don't need to raise a voice any more for the conditions of those who are vulnerable and oppressed, but let us remember that racism, oppression, exploitation, trafficking and number of oppressive factors remain in the United States and around the world. Many of our brothers and sisters around the world do not enjoy basic human rights. We must not close our eyes to the injustices of those who are trafficked both inside our Countries of origin as well as across borders. We are called to raise our voices for the men, women, boys and girls who are kept silent by their traffickers.

RECEIVE:

Look for any information, any actions about domestic violence or human trafficking in your region – then get engaged! Lord, touch our mind, and our eyes so we may see and understand the suffering of our brothers and sisters here and there. Give us the courage of Debora and the compassion of Jaël.

DAY 27

READ

Proverbs 31:8-31 (NIV)

REFLECT

This passage is a very familiar passage highlighting what is often quoted as qualities of the perfect "Proverbs Woman." It is often read for Mother's Day Celebrations or special days honoring women. It is a collective of attributes for a godly woman. The chapter outlines the activities of a noble woman whose husband works as a judge at the city gate. The woman is industrious and provides for her family and her household. She is energetic, strong, working hard from morning until night. She is both prudent and wise running her own business endeavors. She is also kind and giving to the poor and needy. Her husband praises and trust her and her children bless her as well. While the scripture primarily centers on the virtuous woman – it is also a celebration of a family, where the husband respects his wife (v11) and the family is characterized by love (v28) and honor for the mother and wife.

The passage takes us back to Eden and reminds us of God's original intent; where man is given an equal, one whose creative capacities are perfectly compatible to his own. It also honors women and highlights some of the many facets of a woman's daily life that would be included from a "perfect world view."

Unfortunately, today in our broken world this kind of relationship between a woman and her family is far from the norm. Globally thousands of women struggle just to feed their family. For many a job or occupation is not a possibility. Too often they fall prey to insidious traffickers who promise them a better life, only to deceive them and trap them with their lies.

This passage reflects God's ideal for the relationship between men and women, a relationship built on equality and mutual respect. Where this level of love, honor, respect and equality is lacking we must first call it out and then work and pray for justice.

Verses 8 and 9 of the chapter call us to do just that; recognizing that there are those who are oppressed and marginalized in society. We are challenged to speak up and do something! It is our duty to come alongside and empower women to be able to reach their God given potential so that they may be "clothed in strength and dignity and laugh without fear of the future" (v. 25).

RESPOND:

Others Trade for Hope is The Salvation Army's global social enterprise, that partners with over 1200 women artisans in Kenya and Bangladesh. The goal of Others is creating dignified work, that respects the strengths and creativity of women to provide for themselves and their families. When you purchase an Others product, you are directly contributing to the creation of fairly compensated work for women who would otherwise have limited opportunity. You can become part of the Others story. Purchase with purpose at: usa.tradeforhope.com/

RECEIVE

Lord, open our eyes and hearts to the needs and concerns of the vulnerable and marginalized of the world. Show us where we can come alongside those who need the tools to be all that you created them to be.



PRESENCE

READ**John 11:17-37 (NIV)****REFLECT**

Anti-human-trafficking means establishing a just world where human-trafficking is impossible—a world where humans have the heart and spirit like Christ, which gets disturbed and moved at the sight of the suffering of others – a world where people may see the reflection of God in each other.

In this story we have seen that the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, God was disturbed and moved when he saw the suffering and pathos of Mary, Martha and all the Jews on the death of Lazarus. In this story we have seen that Lazarus was already dead and was in the tomb for four days when Jesus arrived in Bethany. No sooner did Martha hear that Jesus had arrived in Bethany and she went to meet Him. When Martha went to Jesus, she said to Him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” The same words were uttered by Mary. Both sisters uttered the same words because they both knew that Jesus was the only one who could have saved their brother from the clutches of misery, disease and death. In the same way, we sometimes say that if Jesus, who is the redeemer of whole world, would be here in his physical body, our world would not be suffering in the clutches of human trafficking. Not even one country has escaped the evil that allows for human trafficking to persist.

My Dear friends, in the key verse we have seen that Jesus’ Spirit was moved by the weeping of one woman. We can only imagine how much Jesus’ Spirit is being disturbed and moved when He sees the humans who are being trafficked for selfish and evil motives. As Jesus wept on the grave of Lazarus, He is still weeping when images of God are suffering due to human trafficking. Although Christ is not present physically to help our brothers and sisters, as he helped Mary and Martha, through the help of the Holy Spirit, which has been entrusted to us, he can equip us to fight these evils. After ascending to heaven, He sent Holy Spirit, the Pneuma, wonderful counsellor, advocate. Whenever we are seeing the victims of human trafficking, we need to think, what would Jesus have done if he was present here.

RESPOND

The International Labor Organization estimates that nearly 21 million people are victims of forced labor world-wide— over half of them women and girls.

- Pray for the victims who are being oppressed and downtrodden by human trafficking
- Pray for the men, women, boys and girls who are forced into the sex trade.
- Pray for prevention for our young girls and boys so that they may never have to experience the injustice of being trafficked.

RECEIVE

○ God—disturb our spirits to eradicate human trafficking, so that by doing this, we would be able to bring your kingdom on this earth. Stir our spirits that we may be aware of our young girls and boys in the church services, youth retreats and in Sunday schools so that they would be always careful and watchful about their lives. Amen

READ

Exodus 3:6-8 NIV

REFLECT

In looking at these scripture verses from a human trafficking context, we see how a trafficker could use words and actions to control another person, making that individual believe that they can totally depended on them for their perceived survival, safety, and livelihood. In some instances, the trafficker swoops in to “rescue” vulnerable individuals from a terrible situation while concealing what is ahead for their victim – entrapment into sex or labor trafficking, lost dreams, cries of injustice, and a life of hopelessness.

This was the case for the nation of Israel. Trying to escape a famine and starvation, Egypt “rescued” Israel by providing them with access to food (perceived survival), a place to live (Goshen – perceived safety), and a job to fulfill (taking care of the Pharaohs flocks – a perceived livelihood) (Genesis 47:3-5). Yet, this relationship was too good to be true as Egypt ended up using words and actions on God’s people to eventually control and enslave them.

As we hear the horror stories of people in the grips of human trafficking and their cries, we remember the promise of hope that God gave for deliverance to the enslaved Israelites – that He hears their cries because of their entrapment and is greatly concerned and grieved. He wants to rescue them from the hands that enslave them and bring them into a land of rest, healing, and restoration. We can only hope that one day these individuals will be recovered and welcomed home—and may we demonstrate God’s love for the broken.

RESPOND

There is the story of Tonya* (name has been changed) who, at the age of 13, was trafficked by someone she trusted—forced into a life of misery and sex-trafficking. She was coerced by her trafficker emotionally and psychologically, invisible prisons to the eye, but nonetheless powerful tactics used by traffickers to deny freedom. She was eventually recovered but in her mind, she still lives with the trauma she suffered. May we remember the many Tonya’s who never come out of the life, and pray for God’s healing touch and restoration.

RECEIVE

Lord bring help to those caught in this life of trafficking. Send a person who will aid in recovering these people and offer them hope for a new life. May they come to know Jesus as their personal Savior.

READ

Psalms 28 (NIV)

REFLECT

The LORD is our Shepherd. As members of His flock, we will experience treacherous journeys. The terrain will undoubtedly get rocky for all of us. However, some of us may experience deep, dark horrors. The suffering in these deep, dark places is so terrible that they are unthinkable and unimaginable. Darkness. Loneliness. Hopelessness. Pain.

40.3 million¹ of our sisters and brothers are suffering from physical, emotional, sexual, and mental abuse from being trafficked. 40.3 million women, men, girls, and boys at any given point are being trafficked, and yet, we are often guilty of turning a deaf ear and remaining silent.

We serve a God who hears our cry for mercy. May we come beside those who are suffering and cry out to God for mercy, as we put our trust in the Lord’s mighty hand, for He is our strength and our shield.

Psalms 28 ends with a request: “be their shepherd and carry them forever.” This is our prayer today. Isn’t it beautiful that we serve a God who is our shepherd who will carry us forever? God hears the cries of those who are suffering, and he is willing to carry them forever.

As one sheep in the flock suffers, our Shepherd will carry that sheep. While He is carrying that sheep, there is a special closeness and bond that will form between that sheep and the Shepherd. God’s unfailing love is our comfort and He seeks out those who are suffering. We pray today that God would come close to our sisters and brothers who are experiencing the pain and bondage of human trafficking. May He form a special bond with them as He carries them forever.

RESPOND

- Pray for the men, women, boys and girls who are affected by trafficking and exploitation. Particularly, pray against the gender disparities of this crime, as we see in the 2018 Trafficking in Persons report by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) it reports that 72% of detected victims of trafficking are women and girls.²
- Pray for an end to sexual exploitation in the United States. The 2018 Trafficking in Persons report by the UNODC reports that sexual exploitation is the main form of exploitation in North America.³

RECEIVE

Father, we are thankful that you hear our cry for mercy. In a world filled with so much suffering, we are comforted to know that you hear us and are with us. We ask that you would draw near to those who are suffering. We rejoice because you are our strength and shield. We ask that you would be their Shepherd and carry them forever. As this world is filled with deep pain and suffering, we continue turning to you. We ask these things in your name, Amen.

¹ <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/facts>

² https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf

³ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf

READ

Psalm 10 (NIV)

REFLECT

Have you ever been so angry, so frustrated, so desperate for justice that you just cried out to God with your blood boiling, veins pulsing, lungs bursting? The psalmist felt exactly that way. This psalm of lament is so much more than just lament. It is righteous anger and indignation. Psalm 10 is mind blowing in its accuracy – describing the vile and violent exploitation of the vulnerable and victims of evildoers or “traffickers” in this case, as well as, in describing our God of justice in times of distress. The parallels between the words of this 3000-year-old scripture and the reports of how traffickers in the 21st century prey upon their victims are staggering. If you know anything of the way traffickers operate and who they target. If you have seen any trafficking documentaries, read anything on trafficking in the current media, verses like 8-10 will resonate with today’s news. What is so powerful about this Psalm is that it also shows us the issue of the exploitation of the poor and the oppressed not only from our perspective, but from God’s perspective.

The psalmist directs His cries to God, first asking “Where are You God?” then “Why God?” and then begging God to do something: “Arise O Lord, show yourself strong!” We have all been there, asking those same questions, venting to the God of the Universe as to why he allows suffering and injustice to continue.

The psalmist then reminds himself that God does see and will repay the evil that has plagued the world for generations. He affirms God’s sovereignty in verse 16 saying “the Lord is king forever and ever” and reminds that God will bring justice to the oppressed. In His way and in His time.

By sending Jesus as God incarnate, God stepped into a broken world and brought ultimate redemption from all sin. By sending the Holy Spirit, God has also empowered the church and believers everywhere and throughout all generations to act on His behalf. We are to be His hands and feet and His voice speaking out and fighting against evil in all its forms, no matter what the cost, or what the odds seems to be against us. We can bring the justice that others need.

RESPOND:

For over 151 years the Salvation Army has battled against human trafficking, and the fight continues today on a global front. In the USA alone there are currently 46 Anti-Human Trafficking initiatives across the nation supporting survivors of human trafficking in rebuilding their lives. Look up information on the work in your area at, www.sajustice.us and pray that the Lord will strengthen, protect, and equip those who minister on the front lines. And as you have opportunity, join us in the fight.

RECEIVE

Lord, we know we are in an eternal battle. We know we have an enemy who wants to kill, steal and destroy your creatures and your creation. We thank you that You DO see and hear the cries of the oppressed. Raise up your people, your church, your body.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

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#fightforfreedom



@sajusticeus

Thank you for join us in this #FightForFreedom

**If you suspect someone is a victim of human trafficking,
call the national human trafficking hotline:
1-888-373-7888**



SA JUSTICE

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