

Unreached Peoples & Trafficking?

BY KEVIN HIGGINS

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Why an issue of *Mission Frontiers* on the global tragedy of trafficking? How does this connect in some way to our purpose of advancing and catalyzing movements to Jesus among the least reached peoples of the earth?

I want to address that from several lenses, but it might be good first to state as simply as possible what is meant by trafficking.

What Are We Talking About?

Pure and simple, trafficking involves transporting (though this does not always mean crossing country or even state borders) someone into a situation of exploitation. This can include forced labor, marriage, prostitution and organ removal. As such, some prefer to refer to trafficking as “modern slavery.” Note that “trafficking” does not equal “sex trade,” though this does constitute a large portion of what takes place, especially in the USA.

Statistics are notoriously difficult to establish but my searches suggest the number of men, women and children trafficked could range between 20 million and 40 million. Of that total, perhaps 71% are women and girls. It is profitable: globally perhaps as much as \$150 billion in profits for traffickers.

You will learn more about all this in this edition of *MF*, but I wanted to open with at least a cursory description.

But let me go to the central question, which has two parts within the same question.

Why Are We Talking About It?

Of course, one obvious reason to talk about trafficking is to state simply: because this matters to the Master we serve. The One who wept over Jerusalem’s refusal to come to Him is certainly weeping over this global evil.

Another comes from Isaiah, a window into the heart of Jesus. I say it that way because Isaiah is, in general, one of the books Jesus quoted from the most, and because it is where He drew His inaugural text from in Luke 4. Also, because of Matthew’s summary of Jesus’ ministry in Matthew 12:18ff, which refers to Isaiah 42 and the Spirit anointed Servant of Lord who will pursue justice for the nations. Isaiah’s version reads, “He will not falter nor be discouraged” until He “establishes justice in the earth.” (42:4)

So, we talk about it because He would. This would be and *is* on His heart. He would be, again *is*, persevering in His effort to bring justice, including ending this evil.

If we say we are people of Jesus, shaped by Jesus, and imitating the one who said He did what He saw the Father doing, and if we know He would be doing this, then we have to at least bring it to the light.

But that begs the second portion of the same question, because there are already organizations who see it as their purpose to end trafficking. So...

Why Are We Talking About It?

In other words, how does this advance the purposes of seeing movements to Jesus among the least reached?

I will respond with two deeply connected responses and one example. I admit these are limited in scope and that there is much more to be said. But my column is meant to be short, and others will take up this issue in this edition.

First, drawing again from Matthew, we speak often about and report on the progress of movements that are multiplying disciples. The latest data is on the cover of every edition of *MF*! As Matthew puts it, “making disciples” includes as a core element, “teaching them to obey everything I commanded you.” While we cannot point to some specific proof text about trafficking, the commands to love our neighbor as ourselves, the parable of the Good Samaritan (found in Luke) and so much more would suggest that full discipleship will result in at least

some disciples in a movement among the unreached being encouraged and drawn to address this issue in their context.

Second, deeper than obedience to the commands specifically, there is the heart of Jesus. Matthew citing Isaiah 42, or Luke and Isaiah 61 and Jesus' own examples of touching, cleansing, releasing and rescuing. Let's not over-spiritualize all this. Release of the captive in Luke 4 is not just spiritual (though it certainly includes this) or metaphorical.

Disciples in movements to Jesus will be marked deeply, if the movement is authentic, by the heart of Jesus. And that heart will most often be "caught" from the disciple-maker. Thus, we talk about it here because awareness of this and other evils and allowing such awareness to affect our hearts—indeed infect our hearts with His heart—is a critical element in actual authentic discipleship.

It has to affect us to affect others.

And I promised an example.


Example

I lived and worked primarily in South Asia. One of the Unreached People Groups in which we saw a movement emerge and grow had large numbers of primarily men who lived, worked and migrated back and forth from the Gulf.

But many did not in fact go back and forth. Why? Because on arrival, their visa sponsors took their passports and documents and in effect enslaved them through entrapment. They were unable to go home and had no voice or avenue to protest. In later years I came to visit believers from this people group who lived in the Gulf. The movement spread along natural lines. And we became more and more keenly aware of the plight of these men, their families in their home country and the situation they were in.

I wish I could say we had a grand strategy emerge to solve the issue, but for that movement in that Unreached People Group, this has become an issue of faithful discipleship: how do believers among those trafficked and entrapped workers live faithfully? How do movement leaders seek to find ways to bring the issues to light? How are their families at home taken care of?

The heart of Jesus, whose disciples we claim to be and whose disciples we hope to multiply, is prompting these questions. To fail to shed light on this issue, as Frontier Ventures, would mean we are remiss in pursuing our calling: Movements to Jesus, expressing the fullness of the kingdom, among all peoples.

That is why *we* are talking about *it*. 



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