



GETTING STARTED

- What comes to mind when you hear the phrase 'sexual exploitation'?
- Have you ever considered that women working in the sex industry may be modern-day slaves?
- Are you aware of sexual exploitation happening within your own community?



WHAT IS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

Sexual exploitation involves any non-consensual or abusive sexual act performed without a victim's permission. This includes prostitution, escort work, or pornography. Women, men and children of both sexes can be victims, and many will be controlled through violence and abuse.



WATCH ANITA'S STORY

<https://youtu.be/DnWtHR1cHdU>



QUESTIONS FROM THE FILM

- What struck you from the film?
- Did anything you heard surprise you?
- How did Anita's story make you feel?
- What inspired you?
- What questions does it leave you with?

"I'd heard stories of sex slaves, but I never thought it would happen to me."

Anita's story



DID YOU KNOW?

Worldwide women and girls make up

99% OF ALL VICTIMS of forced sexual exploitation²



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God."
(1 Corinthians 6 v19)



EXPLORATION

Modern slavery is a global crime, and sexual exploitation of women and girls is a component part of the global, national and local picture. It really is present in our communities, in every community, but unseen by many of us. Exploited women have their movements restricted and are controlled and commanded to work by their exploiters, who degrade and dehumanise them.

In a world where the Internet has enabled a positive connection for families and friends separated geographically, it has also provided a dangerous opportunity for misuse - for online sexual exploitation and 'cybersex trafficking.' This form of exploitation cruelly exposes and controls vulnerable women and girls for financial gain, demeaning them physically and damaging their personality and God-given spirit.

Being sexually exploited causes deep suffering to the body and spirit. As part of the body of Christ this diminishes all of us. Where a person is reduced or damaged, we are indeed commanded to recognise that person as a part of ourselves, part of the body of Christ, as someone who matters to God. We need to join with others to help restore and renew victims and bring healing.

Our faith and calling is to love those who we don't always see and find ways to demonstrate care and concern, recognising how precious each person is to God. Part of loving our neighbour is being aware how to shield vulnerable women and children from sexual exploitation.

Each day when we wake and embrace the two commandments that Jesus has given us, we might ask ourselves how far our prayers, intentions and actions are drawing others closer to the Kingdom of God and out of the suffering that the worst of humankind has created.



FOR REFLECTION



1 Consider the damage suffered through being repeatedly raped and exploited. To illustrate the challenge of enabling recovery, think about the 500-year-old art of Kintsugi, 'joining with gold.' This art enables broken pottery to be repaired with a seam of lacquer and precious metal. This is delicate, costly, time consuming work by a skilled craftsperson. Look at the care that is taken to repair this piece of pottery. How much more precious are the women and girls who have been exploited?

2

A person rescued from sexual abuse needs the expertise of compassionate professionals to help recovery and restitution. As the survivor in the film said: "I can't forget the past, but I hope for the future." Survivor recovery from sexual exploitation is a long physical, emotional and psychological journey which can only be achieved with seamless compassion and professionalism. Are there organisations you could support who offer accompaniment to those seeking recovery from sexual exploitation?

3

How might we learn to witness to the miracle that each human body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, a gift from God – to be celebrated, protected and used for God's glory?



PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Life-giving God, restorer and healer, help us to be agents that bring about real change in the lives of those who have fallen under the control of people who seek to sexually demean and exploit them.

Teach us to notice, search out and find ways of enabling our oppressed sisters to know the comfort and security of being blessed in body and soul.

We make this prayer in Jesus name.

Amen.



FURTHER READING

If you have been moved by today's session, you may like to spend some time during the week reflecting on what you have learnt about sexual exploitation and how you can show vulnerable women in your community how precious they are.

You can also read more about Harriet's radical ministry:

HARRIET MONSELL - CARING FOR 'FALLEN WOMEN'

By the middle of the 19th century, the problem of 'fallen women' in England was overwhelming. The 1851 census had determined that there were between half a million and a million more women in England than men. The situation was so troublesome that the term 'surplus women' was coined to describe the excess masses of unmarried women. In a social system where women were completely dependent on men for their living, up to 25 per cent of the population was at risk of having no means of support. Those who had no luck securing any of the jobs that women were allowed such as servants, teachers, or nurses were often forced into prostitution to keep from starving.

Only three years after Harriet Monsell began her work at the Clewer House of Mercy, it had grown from a handful of 'fallen women' to a rapidly growing population of eighty women. Over the next few decades, the work would continue to adjust to meet the needs of the day, and by 1901, the Community of St. John Baptist had expanded to more than 45 branch houses. At CSJB's height in the early 20th century, the reach of the ministry extended to England, Wales, India, and the United States and included schools, orphanages, mission houses and hospitals.



Mother Harriet recognised that her work was within a social system in which women were completely dependent on men – in their shadows. She placed a great emphasis upon helping the women gain confidence and competence to enable them to be able to support themselves. **How important is this perspective today and how might it be best expressed?**

“There are thousands of women in the UK trapped within the sex industry.”

Rosie Hopley, Beloved

“If there's one thing that I wish people in the UK knew about human trafficking and modern slavery is that it is happening in this country. This isn't something that just happens in foreign countries with foreign people. It happens here in the UK. In fact, the biggest group of victims in the system for the last couple of years have been British victims. It is British people being exploited by British people.”

Louise Hulland, campaigner and journalist



SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN@THEWELL



women@thewell was developed by the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy (IOLM) to provide a holistic and multifaceted range of service to vulnerable women who are caught in multiple cycles of abuse and social exclusion. Although the concept of women@thewell was new, it came as a result of Sister Lynda Dearlove's experience of working with women in the East-End of London, the majority of whom were involved in street-based prostitution, homelessness, drugs, alcohol, violence, physical and mental ill health.

Throughout that time, Sister Lynda began to build up a clear picture of what was keeping them from making the changes that they would want / need to make in their lives to break out of the multiple cycles of chaos and abuse that they seemed to be locked into. One of the major contributing factors identified was the complexity of services (often referred to as "revolving doors") - in which many people may be working with them on specialist issues, but nothing ever seems to come together at the right time so that they can get their lives sorted out, or every organisation that they approach sends them to another to have their needs met.

For the last 14 years, women@thewell has sought to ensure that women in London entrapped in the sex trade are given hope and are supported to see that an alternative future is possible. The team has worked across London Boroughs of Camden, Islington, Haringey, Hackney and Camden and in 2019/20 provided ongoing support to 53 women they met on the streets.



<https://www.watw.org.uk/>

"One of the biggest problems we face in the modern slavery arena is that the offences are hidden."

Jen Baines, GLAA



WOMEN IN THE SHADOWS

resource: www.theclewerinitiative.org/womenintheshadows

²Global statistics taken from Stacked Odds, a recent report by Walk Free exploring how lifelong inequality shapes women and girls' experience of modern slavery
www.cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2020/10/09024229/Stacked-Odds_201008_FNL1_LR.pdf