

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Preacher's Toolkit



Summary

People are made for purpose, not purchase. The sex trade is a deeply damaging industry, which treats women as objects, perverts God's gift of sex, and leaves a trail of destruction. Christians must speak out against it, while supporting (and not condemning) women who in many cases, have been deeply hurt.

A Clash of Worldviews

A better story

Sex is a good gift from a gracious God. It is a gift designed to be enjoyed within the loving, sacrificial, covenant relationship of marriage as the highest expression of human intimacy. Human beings are made in the image of God, worthy of great value and honour, and not to be bought or sold as commodities, or treated as objects. As Christians we have a duty to speak for the vulnerable and voiceless, to help those who are mistreated and abused, as we look forward to the day when our God of justice will put all wrongs right.

Points of difference

Those who advocate for prostitution claim that 'sex work is work'. But commercial sexual exploitation is a violation of human dignity. It treats women's bodies as nothing more than items for purchase. It undermines God's vision for humanity, in which we are all "made in His image", are created and loved by Him, and have inherent dignity and worth. No human should be bought or sold. We believe in a God who sees all that is wrong, and weeps alongside us in suffering; He is himself angry at human sin and the way

we treat fellow image-bearers, and one day He will return and judge all that is evil.

Those in favour of prostitution claim that sex is simply something fun to be sold. But commercial sexual exploitation is a perversion of God's good gift of sex. Sexual exploitation is not merely limited to in-person visits to a brothel; many who are featured in pornographic content have been trafficked. Most women in prostitution report being physically abused, and see having sex with 'clients' essentially as rape. Sex is designed to be within the loving, sacrificial, covenant relationship of marriage. God's vision is for it to be the highest form of human intimacy. Sexual exploitation is inherently selfish, based on taking rather than giving.

Advocates for prostitution claim that I am in charge of my own body. But commercial sexual exploitation is extremely damaging for women. Most women who are in prostitution feel trapped, many suffer deep psychological harm, and others suffer physical harm. Christians are called to speak on behalf of the vulnerable and the voiceless, and to love and walk alongside those who have been abused. We believe the best (political) way of supporting women in this area is by adopting the Nordic Model; this means that women in prostitution will not be criminalised; instead, only the buyer will be.

Politics

In England, Wales and Scotland, the purchase and selling of sex is legal, but the Sexual Offences Act 2003 criminalises more than 30 activities related to prostitution, such as: soliciting sex on the street; kerb crawling; advertising using cards in telephone boxes; causing someone to become a prostitute; controlling prostitution for personal gain (i.e. pimping); and running a brothel.

Paying for sex from a person who has been trafficked, forced or coerced is technically illegal, but is rarely enforced. Brothels are usually licensed

as massage parlours or saunas, and are rarely inspected by the police.

Northern Ireland has adopted the Nordic Model since the passing of Lord Morrow's Bill in 2015. This means that it is illegal to purchase sex, but it is not illegal for an individual to sell sex, protecting vulnerable people (usually women) who have been coerced into prostitution. CARE was involved in drafting the Bill.

The Nordic Model was originally introduced in Sweden in 1999; reports suggest it reduces the

amount of on-street prostitution, reduces the number of men claiming to have purchased sexual services, and acts as a deterrent against organised crime and human trafficking. The Nordic model has since been introduced in Iceland (2009), Canada (2014), France (2016) and the Republic of Ireland (2017). CARE is now calling for it to be rolled out across the UK.

In 2026, MSP Ash Regan introduced a Bill to the Scottish Parliament to bring the Nordic Model to Scotland. The Scottish Government did not support the Bill and, although some SNP MSPs voted for it, it was defeated at Stage One by 64 votes to 54. The SNP have said that they will bring the idea back to the Scottish Parliament if they have a majority after the next election.

Glossary

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

The abuse of individuals, often through coercion, manipulation, or deception, for sexual purposes in exchange for money, goods, or other benefits.

PROSTITUTION

The exchange of sexual services for payment or some form of material benefit. It typically involves the provision of sexual activities by one person in return for money, goods, or services provided by another.

FORCED PROSTITUTION

When individuals are compelled to engage in prostitution against their will.

SEXUAL SERVICES

Sexual acts performed in prostitution. Evidence shows that these acts are usually dehumanising, violent and unsafe.

NORDIC MODEL

The Nordic Model approach to prostitution decriminalises all those who are prostituted, provides support services to help them exit, and makes buying people for sex a criminal offence, in order to reduce the demand that drives sex trafficking.

EXITING SERVICES

Assistance offered to individuals wanting to leave prostitution. These services offer support and genuine routes out of exploitation.

SOLICITING

Offering sexual services in exchange for payment.

KERB CRAWLING

People who drive to particular locations to buy sex. Usually this activity involves looping around streets before stopping to pick someone up.

SEX TRAFFICKING

The buying and selling of individuals for forced sexual exploitation.

BROTHEL

A place where a person can go to purchase sexual services. This might be a in seemingly residential property or may function through another business such as a massage parlour, sauna or nail bar.

PIMP

A pimp is an individual who profits from the commercial sexual exploitation of others by managing, controlling, or facilitating their involvement in prostitution. Pimps often exploit vulnerable individuals through coercion, manipulation, or violence to gain financial or material benefits. Pimps are often referred to by those in prostitution as their boyfriend, partner, or husband.

PUNTER

The name given by those in prostitution to 'clients' who are buying their services.

MODERN SLAVERY

The exploitation of people, for personal or commercial gain, by the use of force, fraud, coercion or deception. It is an umbrella term which covers forced crime, forced labour, debt bondage, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, slavery and more. It happens in rural areas as well as urban environments.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The movement (recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt) of people for exploitation, by the use of force, fraud, coercion or deception. Human trafficking does not have to mean movement across borders; it can be within the same country, or even the same town.

GROOMING

Where a person builds a relationship with another person, adult or child, with the purpose of exploiting them. It can take place online or in-person and can take a short or long period of time.

Key Bible Passages

GENESIS 1:27

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

GENESIS 2:24

“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

LEVITICUS 19:29

“Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness.”

JOSHUA 6:25

“But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.”

2 SAMUEL 13:10-14

“Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand.” And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom. But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, “Come to bed with me, my sister.” “No, my brother!” she said to him. “Don’t force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don’t do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.” But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.”

PSALM 10:17-18:

“You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror.”

PROVERBS 31:8-9

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

ISAIAH 58:6

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?”

MATTHEW 1:5-6

“Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.”

MATTHEW 5:27-28

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

ONLYFANS

A subscription-based platform for content creators. The site is widely used to promote and sell explicit sexual content.

For Further Research

CARE’s Cause Page (care.org.uk/cause/commercial-sexual-exploitation)

Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation (cease.org.uk)

Nordic Model Now! (nordicmodelnow.org)
Azalea (azalea.org.uk)

Tamar (tamarwestminster.org)

Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner:
Behind the Profile: Sexual Exploitation and
Trafficking through Adult Services Websites,
2026

APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation:
Men Who Buy Sex: Understanding the Demand
for Prostitution and Sex Trafficking in
the UK, 2024

APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation:
Bust the Business Model: How to stop sex
trafficking and sexual exploitation in the UK,
2021

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission:
The limits of consent, 2019

The Guardian: ‘Trafficked’ podcast, 2023

Julie Bindel: The Pimping of Prostitution, 2019

Sophie Hayes: Trafficked, 2012

Rachel Moran: Paid for: My journey through
Prostitution, 2013

Louise Perry: The Case against the Sexual
Revolution, 2022

Caitlin Spencer: Please let me go, 2017

Elaine Storkey: Scars Across Humanity, 2015

MATTHEW 21:31-32

“Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

LUKE 7:37-38, 48

“A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them...Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.””

JOHN 8:10-11

“Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.””

1 CORINTHIANS 6:15-16

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.””

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18-20

“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

REVELATION 21:4

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Quotes

“At its core, sex trafficking is the monetization of sexual domination of one human being over another.”

LIZ MILLER, founder of the International Organization for Stopping Exploitation of Women (IoSEW)

“We say that slavery has vanished from European civilization, but this is not true. Slavery still exists, but now it applies only to women and its name is prostitution.”

VICTOR HUGO, Author

“I may as well have been a plastic doll. After they had their way, I would lose my appeal and they’d dispose of me.”

RHIANNON, Survivor

“I got to the point early on in prostitution where I saw being happy as simply unrealistic, and I was right. I didn’t know any women who were happy in prostitution and I didn’t meet any in later years either. There are no ‘happy hookers’ in my experience.”

RACHEL MORAN, Survivor

“Men who pay for sex are buying sexual subordination. ‘Consent’ that has to be bought is not consent.”

JULIE BINDEL, Feminist writer

“The worst part about prostitution is that you’re obliged not to sell sex only, but your humanity. That’s the worst part of it: that what you’re selling is your human dignity. Not really so much in bed, but in accepting the agreement - in becoming a bought person.”

KATE MILLETT, Writer and activist

“There is no such thing as a “right” to sex. When men claim that prostitution reduces rape. What they really mean is that it is OK to rape prostituted women, which is how we experience sex with punters. Prostitution is rape.”

FIONA BROADFOOT, Survivor

“If prostitution is ‘sex work’, then by its own logic, rape is merely theft.”

JULIE BINDEL, Feminist writer

“When I have had to disclose my criminal convictions, it makes me deeply depressed and I feel like going to bed and hiding. How do you explain you were raped for a period of 20 years? I feel I am being punished for the past and always will be but I don’t believe I am a risk to anyone. I just want to be free.”

ANONYMOUS SURVIVOR

“Prostitution has this way of stealing all the dreams, goals and beautiful essence out of a woman. During my years in it, I didn’t meet one woman who enjoyed what she was doing. Everyone was trying to get out.”

ANONYMOUS SURVIVOR *Prostituted for 19 Years*

“It’s so simple, and so much less risky and humiliating, to hop on a website and set up a profile than to stand on a street corner. But the fact that your leering client is physically absent does not alter the philosophical lie at the heart of prostitution, digital or otherwise: that consent itself can be bought.”

POPPY SOWERBY, *Journalist*

““Sex work” implies that prostituted people really want to do what they have virtually no choice in doing. That their poverty, homelessness, prior sexual abuse as children, subjection to racism, exclusion from gainful occupations or unequal pay plays no role. That they are who the pornography says they are, valuable only for use in it.”

CATHERINE MACKINNON, *Author and activist*

“Prostitution has never been a matter of personal choice or female empowerment. Rather, the role of ‘buyer’ versus ‘seller’ has always been determined not only by sex but also by race, nationality and - above all - class.”

LOUISE PERRY, *Journalist and author*

“The much maligned Christian vision of sexual chastity, faithfulness, and self-control is a spectacularly pro-human vision. The bodies of a husband and wife do not belong to shareholders but to each other. The fruits of their passion are not customers but children, and the place they build is not an industry but a home, pulsating with the same love that reverberates between the crucified Christ and his redeemed church.”

SAMUEL D. JAMES, *Author*

“Indeed, sex is perhaps the most powerful God-created way to help you give your entire self to another human being. Sex is God’s appointed way for two people to reciprocally say to one another, “I belong completely, permanently, and exclusively to you.” You must not use sex to say anything less.”

TIM KELLER, *Pastor and author*

Key Stats

Commercial Sexual exploitation in the UK

- 105,000 people in the UK are estimated to be in prostitution. The vast majority are women, particularly from Eastern Europe and Asia (the Metropolitan Police estimate 70% of women involved in off-street prostitution are foreign nationals).
- A 2002 study found that 74% of women in prostitution identify poverty, the need to pay household expenses, and the need to support children as strong motivations for being drawn into and remaining in prostitution.
- It is estimated that between 80 and 95% of women involved in street prostitution are problematic drug users; some women have traded sex for drugs, alcohol, or the money to feed an addiction.
- There are also strong correlations between rates of prostitution and homelessness, sexual abuse, violence at home, time in care, and poor education. One study of women in prostitution found that a third of women left education at 14 or younger, and 39% had no formal qualifications.

- Up to 70% of women in prostitution have been in local authority care, and 85% of women involved in prostitution have been physically abused by a family member.
- According to a 2024 Yougov survey, 9% of men in the UK have paid someone for sex. Fewer than 1% of women have. 64% of men think it should be legal to pay for sex, compared to 41% of women.
- 15% of men in the UK have paid for a striptease or lap-dance, compared to 1% of women. 22% of men have paid for a pornographic magazine. Just 2% of women have.
- Up to 75% of women in prostitution in the UK started being paid for sex acts before they were 18 years old, with 15 being the average of entry.
- 85-95% of those in prostitution want to leave it, but have no other options for financial survival.

Commercial sexual exploitation across the globe

- Worldwide, \$150 billion a year is generated from human trafficking – two-thirds of that is from commercial sexual exploitation.

- Nearly 736 million women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. Almost 1 in 5 girls are sexually abused at least once in their life.
- Around 1 in 5 sex trafficking victims are children, and 83% of their traffickers are family members of the abused child. 1 out of every 100 children in the Philippines was a victim of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in 2022.
- The majority of human trafficking victims come from vulnerable populations, and of the approximately 24.9 million victims of forced labour, an estimated 4.8 million are trafficked for sex. 21% are children.

Harms of prostitution

- A study involving 133 women in prostitution in five locations across England found that over half of the women had been raped or indecently assaulted.
- Another report found that 64% of those in prostitution had been threatened with a weapon, 73% had been physically assaulted, and 57% had been raped.
- Women involved in street prostitution are 60 to 100 times more likely to be murdered than are non-prostituted women, and the conviction rate for murder drops from 75% to 26% in the killings of women involved in prostitution.
- 76% of those involved in prostitution suffer from PTSD – a comparable rate to rape sur-

vivors and survivors of state-sponsored torture, and higher than war veterans.

Pornography

- There are more than 4.2 million adult websites, and around 25% of search engine requests are pornography-related. The UK has the second highest incidence of internet pornography searches in the world, and Ofcom estimates that 29% of UK adults access online pornography each month.
- According to cases reported to the US National Human Trafficking Hotline, pornography was the 3rd-most common form of sex trafficking, after escort services and illicit massage businesses. One report found that of 854 women in prostitution, across 9 countries, 49% were forced to make pornography while being enslaved in sex trafficking. Other websites like Pornhub host user-generated pornographic content without verifying the age or consent of those involved.
- 45% of Pornhub scenes included at least one act of aggression. 97% of these acts were committed against women.
- Young people are often exposed to violent pornography, depicting degrading or painful sex acts: 79% have seen violent pornography before age 18. 36% of young people have actively sought violent content out. 47% of young people stated that girls ‘expect’ sex to involve violent behaviour such as slapping and choking, and 42% suggested that girls ‘enjoy’ such behaviour.

Stories

Anita grew up in a traditional family in Albania. She and her boyfriend ran away to Rome, because her family wanted her to marry someone else. One day in Rome, a man came to the hotel room with a gun, telling Anita he’d paid her boyfriend €3,000 for her, and that if she didn’t go with him, he’d kill her. He moved her to the UK, and she was forced to have sex with many different men. There were many other girls, but none spoke her language. They lived in terrible cramped conditions and were forced to work seven days a week. She had no phone, no ID, and was told she’d get in trouble if the police found her. Anita was eventually rescued when the police raided the house, and she was taken to a safe house, before receiving medical attention for her injuries. Now she is slowly starting to rebuild her life.

Sophie Hayes spent five years building a friendship with someone she had met in the north of England. Later, she discovered that he had been using this time to groom her, and to discover personal details by which he could trap her. He trafficked her to Italy for sex, seized her passport, and made threats against her and her family. He forced her onto the streets to sell her body, seven days/week for six months. She said: “Men were willing to pay me 20 to 30 euros (\$27 to \$40) for sex. Doctors, lawyers, police officers, businessmen would line up five or six deep on weekend nights at the street corner, waiting to pay for a 10- to 15-minute sexual encounter in their cars, I would hop out of one and into the next.” After six months of abuse, she stumbled into a hospital, and called her mother.

Crystal became involved in prostitution in her early twenties through the influence of her 'boyfriend' who she now recognises was actually a pimp. About her experience as a prostitute, she says: "Prostitution isn't glamorous and fun. It's scents and tastes and body fluids, pretending to enjoy (or at least endure) stuff you don't want to do - stuff that hurts, stuff that's degrading." She explained that she often threw up in anticipation of what she might face and turned to alcohol to cope. "My body always hurt, from the constant rough sex," she said. "I developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I got flashbacks and nightmares, when I could sleep. The addiction and the prostitution went together - I sold myself to fund my habit, and I couldn't do it sober. It was a vicious cycle."

One anonymous survivor described how subscription-based services, like OnlyFans, act as a gateway to sexual exploitation. These websites are marketed as 'empowering' but actually create norms that push women into more extreme content and offline encounters. She responded to an online advert for what appeared to be a legitimate opportunity for "adult content modelling". However the agency took control of her account, including ID documents. "They said it was legal and flexible... but they started posting things I never approved". Over time there was a gradual and coercive shift from modelling to explicit performance, with no verification of identity. "The platform did not act to prove that the person streaming was the one who actually owned the account."

At the age of 15, **Fiona Broadfoot** was groomed by her 'boyfriend'. He became her pimp, and forced her to sell sex on the streets. When she finally escaped his clutches, she was picked up by another pimp. She suffered violence and abuse both from the pimps and the 'punters'; she was regularly arrested by the police (who would not arrest the pimps). By age 17, she had 39 convictions for soliciting and loitering. She eventually escaped at age 26, after hearing about the violent death of her cousin, who was also in forced prostitution, and had been murdered by a 'punter'. In 1996, she spoke about her experiences at the International Conference to end Violence against Women. Since then she has campaigned to end the sex trade, and to end the criminalisation of women who are in prostitution.

Pastoral Issues

For women who have experienced sexual exploitation or assault

- For those who have been abused and exploited this will be an extremely painful topic. Many will experience severe trauma and significant mental and physical health problems. It may be worth warning people in advance of your talk that it will touch on sensitive themes, such as sexual abuse, so that people have the opportunity to leave the room, and that support will be available after the service.
- Some victims will feel a sense of shame or guilt. Even if the abuse took place a long time ago, individuals may need consistent care and help in addressing their needs, pain and trauma. Professional help and services from charities such as Tamar or Azalea may also be sought.
- The need for good safeguarding practices will be of high importance; seek counsel from safeguarding organisations to ensure that people receive the help and care they need.
- It is important to stress that we believe in a God of justice who came to earth to bring hope to the weary, healing to the broken, and comfort to the downhearted. God mourns over sexual abuse and exploitation and He will one day make all things new; those who perpetrate and carry out evils such as these will have to go before the throne of God and give an account for their lives.

For those who are struggling with pornography or might have visited a prostitute

- The statistics are clear that there will be many people within your church (and not just men) who are struggling, or have previously struggled, with lust and sexual sin.
- Encourage them to confide in a trusted friend, and if they are married, to be open with their spouse. Remind them that they are not alone in this struggle, and that they have the Holy Spirit inside them working to transform into the likeness of Jesus.
- It is important that all of us reflect on the weight of our sin; but many will already feel ashamed of what they are doing. Encourage them that when we confess our sins, Jesus is faithful, and there is no sin too great that it cannot be covered by his blood. As Christians, we are united with Christ, and can live free from shame or accusation.
- Encourage them to take wise steps to guard their hearts; they might want to sign up with an accountability site, such as Covenant Eyes.
- Above all, help them to turn their eyes to Jesus; we do not just battle sin by turning away from something, but by turning towards someone. The more someone sees how wonderful Jesus is, the more they will be able to consider all things 'rubbish' by comparison.