



Q & A



Ending Human Trafficking *A Handbook of Strategies for the Church Today*

April 5, 2022 | \$25, 224 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4187-5

Shayne Moore is an author, editor, and activist. She coauthored *Refuse to Do Nothing: Finding Your Power to Abolish Modern-Day Slavery*. She is the cofounder of Redbud Writers Guild, and former director of operations at the Humanitarian Disaster Institute at Wheaton College Graduate School. She is a writer at World Bicycle Relief and is a member of the World Vision Speakers Bureau. Also visit shaynemoore.com.

Prevention Is Crucial for Ending Human Trafficking

What prompted the three of you to write *Ending Human Trafficking*?

Shayne Moore: We believe the body of Christ is uniquely positioned for the essential work of prevention. When Christians focus on those dangerously close to falling off the cliff, a sense of urgency will rise to catch victims before they are crushed. The very nature of the church as an institution and its placement within communities uniquely enable the church to prevent human trafficking.

What we know from either serving in pastoral leadership ourselves or working in churches along our professional careers is that leaders are often functioning at maximum capacity. We don't believe every church has to have a separate ministry addressing human trafficking. Our hope is that by informing and providing the language around the problem, leaders might begin to see strategic ways their churches might already be addressing this problem.

Kimberly McOwen Yim: We know of many well-intentioned people who want to do their part in ending human trafficking but have had a hard time knowing where to begin or recognizing organizations that are doing sustainable work, or they were simply finding themselves overwhelmed by the issue and gave up before engaging. We also know pastors who seemed so overwhelmed by another issue to address in their church that they simply chose to not engage. We understand the overwhelming feeling of this issue. But we also have vision and hope for what is possible when the church is empowered and chooses to engage. Our desire in writing this book is that it would be used as an accessible resource to understand the issue and to begin to see how everyone and every church really are needed to engage and that the engagement to ending trafficking is doable.

Sandra Morgan: When our team started writing, we each wrote our own "why" statement. Much of these statements found its way into the manuscript. The short version is that we are called to be light and salt. We are not called to be saviors or judges. As a leader in the public square, I have been grieved to hear stories of Christian organizations that did not do this well. Often, it just takes a little education to kindly adjust and correct. Faith-based organizations have a growing platform in the public sector, and their deep well of resources in terms of funds and people are important to the battle.

Here's my original "tell me why" statement:

It was just before lunch and the Department of Justice moderator of a national conference for federal human trafficking task force leaders told us we were going to do a table exercise. The topic was, "Discuss one of your biggest task force challenges." A sergeant sat down, rocked his chair back, and announced, "Easy! The whacko church people!" As the administrator of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force, I had also experienced some well-intentioned but problematic church folks. My table all looked at me, and then the lieutenant on our team grinned and said, "Hey, she's one of them!" I immediately quipped, "Yes, I can marry you and bury you." Everyone laughed and the moment was diffused, but the point was made: churches were a problem.



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Sandra Morgan is director of the Global Center for Women and Justice at Vanguard University. She is recognized globally as a leader in the fight against human trafficking. She hosts the *Ending Human Trafficking* podcast, and she also served by presidential appointment on the Public-Private Partnership Advisory Council to End Human Trafficking.

In my community, churches were very active but not always in a good way. A local pastor led rescue investigations and invited the local news media to their rescues. However, they couldn't make any arrest, so the perpetrator got away and the victim's face was all over the news. Christian college students were going into brothels to find victims and bring them out. Because of their presence, field agents had been unable to complete the operation. The waste in man-hours and public funds, as well as the delay in recovering victims, reflected poorly on the college. Church volunteers wanted to open a restoration home. One woman called me multiple months in a row carefully explaining about the home left to her by an aunt and the volunteers who would staff it. When I explained that we could not send victims to her home because it did not meet state and county guidelines, she accused me of persecution.

As a Christian leader, minister, and federal task force administrator, I was grieved by the arrogance of my fellow Christians. I became very intentional about educating church leaders because I felt that their actions diminished our witness in society. I put together a one-page best practice guide for churches, and I began designing presentations for church leadership and calling leaders to mission and biblical ethics. I became and continue to be committed to educating the church. Hosea reminds us that "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos 4:6 NIV). The sergeant made it very clear that the well-meaning actions of churches harmed the churches' reputation in the community. In our language, it harmed their witness.

What is unique about this book in educating about human trafficking?

Kim: This book integrates biblical justice practices into the public-sector approach to combatting human trafficking, which is built on the five Ps: *prevention, protection, prosecution, partnership, and policy*. It also adds a sixth P: *prayer*. The book acts as a guide to serve in the public sector, teaching the language and professional practices that Christians need to understand to be effective.

What specifically does this book offer churches, ministry leaders, and other organizations in the work to end human trafficking?

Shayne, Kim, and Sandra: Imagine a steep and deadly cliff. Today, most churches and nonprofit organizations working in anti-human-trafficking efforts are focused solely on the victims who have already fallen or been thrown off the cliff of modern slavery. The primary focus is on rescue, on scraping up the victims at the bottom. While this is, of course, important, we will never end human trafficking and modern slavery with this as our only strategy. Together, we must erect an impervious fence so that women, men, and children never fall off the cliff in the first place.

If you are someone who wants to help build this fence, this book will educate and assist you and your leadership in discerning what part of it you can build collaboratively with your greater community. What might be your fenceposts? What structural elements can you add? And how can you link your segment to those of others who are also building this protective fence?

Perhaps your community will focus on only one fencepost, such as afterschool care for children in your neighborhood, preventing them from being easy targets for exploitation. Perhaps your church or organization will focus on cybersafety and education, going into schools to do peer-to-peer training.



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Kimberly McOwen Yim is cofounder and executive director of the SOCO Institute, and she writes and speaks on issues related to human trafficking. She is also coauthor (with Shayne Moore) of *Refuse to Do Nothing: Finding Your Power to Abolish Modern-Day Slavery*.

The safety-fence model is one way the church can be collaborative, partnering with law enforcement and other agencies that fight human trafficking to effectively prevent human trafficking from ever happening in the first place. These types of ministries and activities may not be as attention grabbing or sensational as rescue missions and building expensive aftercare homes, yet they are the only way to end this evil in our time. We must build the protective fence together against modern slavery, creating a force field for the vulnerable individuals who are near the cliff's edge.

It is essential that the church and its leaders study the language and issues surrounding human trafficking and be able to engage in the public square—that they become “human-trafficking literate.” Christian communities can build their own fenceposts and ministries to fight human trafficking, but they must be aware, educated, and intelligent about what local law enforcement and social services are doing. For instance, it is necessary to know the laws in our own countries and in nations where we may support nonprofits in this work. Human trafficking is flourishing in our generation, and our safety fence must be strong and strategic.

Could you explain or provide an example of what each of these points looks like in the fight against trafficking?

Shayne: Educate, partner, and collaborate with other stakeholders in the fight to end human trafficking in your communities; report; work toward prevention; welcome survivors; be an advocate; donate; and volunteer.

How would you encourage those who are engaged in this kind of work, of justice for modern-day slaves?

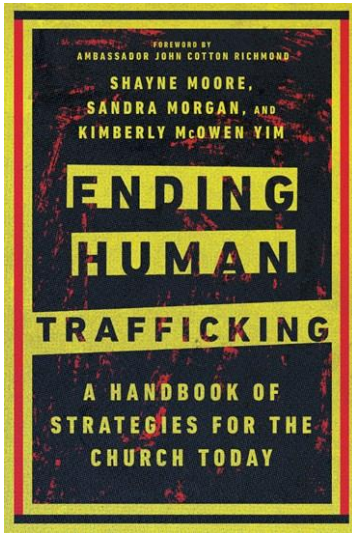
Sandra: Often, we don't even know how we are seen outside our circles, and if we do hear something, we have easy access to clichés to defend our actions, like, “We must be doing something right because the enemy is against us.” Consider that a team of Canadian scholars researched evangelical responses to human trafficking and noted that the focus was almost entirely on sex, so much that they described it as voyeurism! What we frame as heroic is viewed by others as immoral.

James 1:27 gives us a better model: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (NIV). Christ also calls us to be salt and light, which turn out to be just the tools we need to keep ourselves from being polluted. Light reveals impurity. Salt preserves. Salt works best when it dissolves—it is invisible life-giving saline. So, here's the why for this book—if we are to make a difference in our world as salt and light, how can we do that if we stay in our own four walls? What if we are supposed to show up? What if we are to be present? Faithful presence is a strategy for social change, which Dr. James Davison Hunter suggests is the most significant role of the modern church.

My favorite justice verse is Proverbs 31:8: “Speak up for those for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed” (NLT). There are two things to notice. First, this is a mandate and does not say, “If you are called.” It just says, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.” Second, there's a semicolon here, so we don't get to stop with talking about it. The second half calls us to find ways to make things right, to “ensure justice for those being crushed.” This is not criminal justice; we are talking about justice, making things right, making things fair for someone vulnerable and for those being crushed. We are called to be God's witnesses to the ends of the earth. We are given an Old Testament mandate (Prov 31:38), and in the New Testament, the standard for measuring our true religion is how we care for widows and orphans—marginalized women and children—and how we keep ourselves from being polluted by the world.



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Human trafficking is one of the most pressing social justice issues of our time. Though renewed interest in this issue among Christians is a wonderful thing, misinformed and misguided efforts can do more harm than good. Written by seasoned leaders and grounded in theology and up-to-date data, this accessible and compelling handbook will educate churches and organizations for truly effective work.

My favorite story of human-trafficking prevention is very, very old. There is no knight in shining armor or superhero, only a man of God who understood the vulnerability of a widow with two sons in Middle Eastern culture. The story is found in 2 Kings 4. The widow tells Elisha that the creditors are coming to take her two sons as slaves to pay their debt. Elisha's solution is to start right where the widow is. He asks her what she has. She replies she only has a small flask of olive oil, not even enough to cook one last meal. Then Elisha tells her to gather empty jars from the neighborhood, involving her community. He has faith in God and tells the widow to go into her home and begin pouring. So she does. Until. Every. Jar. Was. Full. Now she has a sustainable business and can support her family. We never even learn the boys' names. Prevention is almost invisible. There's no story to tell because they didn't become slaves.

We remember that as we are going, we are making disciples. We are salt and light. We are called to ensure justice for those being crushed, and we are confident that we do not go alone. God is with us.



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