Human Trafficking

Part 1 of 2: Identifying Victims of Trafficking
with Darrell L. Bock, Darlene Line, and Mike Bartel
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Dr. Darrell Bock  Welcome to the table where we discuss issues of God and culture. I'm Darrell Bock, Executive Director for Cultural Engagement here at Dallas Seminary in the Hendricks Center. Today our topic is human trafficking. It's not a pleasant topic. It's a disturbing topic in a lot of ways.

We have two wonderful guests who have a lot of experience in working in this area. I have with me Mike Bartel, who is Director of F.R.E.E. International, an organization that works with human trafficking, headquartered in Las Vegas and he's live with us over Skype. Then, Darlene Line, who's on the Board of F.R.E.E. International and has worked in law enforcement for a long time and has worked these kinds of situations for a long time, is with us.

Darlene, are you in New York City?

Darlene Line  I'm in New Jersey but yes.

Dr. Darrell Bock  You're in New Jersey. Okay.

Darlene Line  Close enough, right?

Dr. Darrell Bock  Close enough, right? So, you can tell by her southern accent that we're glad to have her. Darlene works with Chosen People Ministries in New York City and actually was in a class that I taught years ago in which I found out that she had been in law enforcement and is one tough lady. So, you want to smile at Darlene whenever you see her.

So, we're really glad to have both of you on with us to discuss a really, serious topic that oftentimes is awkward for people to think about. So, we really do appreciate you being with us today.

Mike Bartel  Thanks, Dr. Bock.

Dr. Darrell Bock  Let me get us started. Let me just run off some statistics that are on the F.R.E.E. International website that set the tone for what we're talking about. Trafficking, let's define it first, is the exploitation of a person through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of either forced labor or commercial sex. Most people think that human trafficking is just about sex issues but there also is a forced labor component to this that's important.
Some of the facts that you all have on your website are there are more slaves in the world today than at any other point in history including transatlantic slave trade. You would have thought that would have been gone in the past but that's not the case. Commercial sex trafficking is the third largest criminal enterprise in the world. Trafficking occurs both internationally and domestically within the United States. It's estimated that between 100,000-300,000 children are exploited for commercial sex every year just in the United States alone. The average age of entering into prostitution in the United States is between the ages of 12 and 14. Those are just some of the facts that you all cite. So, this obviously is a difficult and complex issue.

Mike, why don't you tell us how you got involved with a ministry related to human trafficking?

Mike Bartel

My wife and I's involvement with human trafficking goes back to the mid-'90s actually. We were working as campus pastors at Purdue University. My wife was running the International Center there as well as head of their International Friendship Program. It was during orientation week in January of 1995 that I was talking to some of the international students from Africa.

He was explaining to me what he was doing there and his desire to go back to his home country to be able to help with some of the social ills of his country, one of which was human trafficking. He called it slavery at the time. He believed many of his nieces as young as seven, eight years old had been sold into the brothels. Some of his cousins had been sold into the labor camps.

For my wife and I, that was like one of those moments you remember like when 9/11 happened or whatever. You remember everything about that moment in that room. I'm a pastor's kid, third generation. My grandmother was a church planter during the Great Depression. We had a rich heritage in ministry.

But this is something I had never heard of before. It was that that drove us to get involved to the point where we got involved with a ministry overseas called Project Rescue. We were partnering with groups like International Justice Mission. In the mix of all that, just began to hear more and more of what was going on in our home country.
So, my wife and I returned and started a missions organization called F.R.E.E. International which stands for find, rescue, embrace and empower in partnership with local church communities across the country to address it right on our doorstep.

*Dr. Darrell Bock*  
So, your background is you were a campus minister basically and then transitioned into this?

*Mike Bartel*  
Yeah, I was a campus minister when we were first exposed to this issue. We had moved to New York City and pastored for a while working with people throughout New York City that were addressing this including the U.N. It was just a progressive movement to where we began to think how can we get involved directly with this? Boots on the ground, sleeves rolled up to really make an impact with those who were being exploited. But we were first exposed to it as campus pastors at Purdue University and interacting with our international students.

*Dr. Darrell Bock*  
Now, Darlene your background is a military background. You were a civil servant. You were a senior special agent for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. All that tells me I shouldn't mess with you at all. Just smile and be quite friendly. Tell us about how you got involved with this. How did you come to be aware of what's going on with human trafficking?

*Darlene Line*  
I was assigned in the New York offices actually at JFK airport. I was at Internal Affairs Division. Because this was just growing in law enforcement circles of how to combat this, we would see the projected numbers of the estimations of how many people are trafficked into the United States, so, of course, when you're at one of the ports that raises an antenna. What are we missing?

I was asked to join a multi-agency, including NGO task force. It was a human trafficking task force. This was somewhere around 2009 or 2008. It was comprised of FBI, Homeland Security, Department of Social Services, the Labor Division and NGOs. It was just a plethora of agencies coming together.
How can we identify this? It is a hidden crime. It's very much prevalent. However, it's very hidden. It's hard to identify. Oftentimes, if you were looking for people coming into the ports, the trafficked person may not have that fear, did not come in shackles or anything. They're thinking they're coming under the auspices of a friend, a job opportunity, an educational opportunity. That's just one of the ways. So it's very often missed.

The interesting thing though with any of the government agencies is we realize how important it is that you have to bring in the community. Homeland Security has what they call, in 2010, they implemented the Blue Campaign. It's a way of – they can't do it alone. Law enforcement without the public awareness is unable to even make a dent. They do as much as they can but it's the training and the collaboration of all people. It's let us have ears that hear and eyes that see.

A blessing to me is in their list. As you're looking at it, they give you posters; they'll do trainings, as well as the NGOs. However, they also identify the faith-based community in their list of ways of getting trained. So, this is very exciting for me to see that from a government aspect mentioning the faith-based community.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  
Basically, what you're talking about is that there's very little chance of being able to deal with this unless there's kind of an awareness of what's going on. So, let's paint that scenario to start off with. You said it's very hard to spot this taking place. What are clues that people should keep their eyes open for and how do people get into the country? You've already alluded to this a little bit, Darlene. How do people get into the country who are being trafficked and why don't they look like they're being trafficked?
**Darlene Line**

Say I'm traveling with you and I'm a 14 year old. You're a friend of the family. My family trusts you. I'm in a country that doesn't afford me a lot of opportunity. You come and say, hey, I know that I can take her with me or him and go and travel. You're holding my documents. We come. There's no antenna that will go up on the other side because I'm traveling with a friend. I'm not showing any kind of signs of being held against my will. It's not until you've got wheels down and maybe you're taken to a place that you realize, and this is just one aspect, your documents are now not going to be part of you. You are threatened. Your family is threatened. So, when you're passing through the immigration or the customs area, there is nothing that would point to you as being a person that is a potential victim because we're walking through like anyone else.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**

In other words, it's almost like once you land here and you're taken to wherever it is you're taken, the process really, in one sense, starts in terms of trying to hide who you are, change your identity, etc.?

**Darlene Line**

It kicks into gear. That's when you could be forced into this, that and the other thing. Am I correct, Mike?

**Mike Bartel**

Yeah, absolutely. We see with what's going on with political issues of what's going on at the border right now. You have two aspects of this. If we're dealing with international trafficking, which is what we're talking about right now, those being brought into the country, who are being smuggled in, aren't necessarily traffick victims. That's a crime in our country. It's a crime against the border if you end up here without going through the proper process.

But human trafficking really is what happens once they get here which is what Darlene was referring to. Many times what happens are those who bring you into the country, whether it's a friend or whether it's the coyotes getting you across the border, if the transaction ends with that person paying the coyote to get them into the country, that's not human trafficking.

But, if, once you get here, there's more stuff added on to that, hey, I know you don't have the money but here's how you're going to work it off for me. You end up in debt bondage where they force you to work off either through labor or for sex your passage into this country. That's another aspect of that.
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The exploitation part of this, as far as it pertains to human trafficking in a legal sense, happens when either sex or labor is put on the table through force, fraud or coercion for you to perform those acts for the benefit of the other person, whether that's money or some sort of benefit they get from using you in that way.

Dr. Darrell Bock  Okay, Mike, we've talked about the international situation. What happens when it's domestic? How does that happen? Is that often runaways and that kind of thing or are there other ways in which it happens?

Mike Bartel  Yeah, there are so many different ways it happens now. But the statistics you read where the 100,000-300,000 U.S. children a year actually is gotten from the missing children statistics. Every day in the United States 2200 children are reported missing. That doesn't include the ones that the families never take time to report them. These are the ones that are actually reported. So, every day in the U.S. 2200 children are reported missing in this country.

Within 48 hours, law enforcement will tell you one-third of them will have already been approached by a pimp, a trafficker, somebody who might exploit them. That number goes up to two-thirds within 72 hours. So, that's where you get the statistics for U.S. children every year who are either being exploited through trafficking or at high risk for being trafficked, 100,000-300,000.

Now, in saying that, in brief, at the same time, that's just dealing with underage kids. That doesn't deal with those who are over 18 who are also being exploited. Those are purely domestic minor numbers, those who are under age. If we're looking at this law and we're not going to get into great detail with the law but by federal law, you read what was on the website up front, it has to include force, fraud or coercion to be a human trafficking case.

In our country, if you're under 18 years old, you don't have to prove any of those things if you're being commercially exploited for sex. So, 100 percent of the time, if a 17, 16, 15, 14 year old is being sold for sex by a pimp, by somebody along those lines, 100 percent of the time they are a traffick victim. You do not have to prove force, fraud or coercion, just age.
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Dr. Darrell Bock  Okay, there's a little tag on your website on one of the pages, it goes, every 30 seconds another person becomes a victim of human trafficking. That's almost mind blowing to think about how consistently people are caught up into this. The question now is when we think about this, obviously, you've got people who become trapped. They are told this is the only way they can earn the money or whatever to get out of the situation that they're in. But they're never let go once they're trapped, right? They're stuck. Isn't that what happens, Mike?

Mike Bartel  Yeah, it really becomes part of the process. Again, there are so many different ways these children and, particularly, these girls are exploited. One of the ways is a boyfriend scenario. In many ways, it's almost like there's an emotional tie between the person who's being exploited and the person who is exploiting them, to the point where they won't even self-identify as a victim. So, oftentimes, that's why you never see them run among many other reasons. They think they've, so to speak, made their own bed and they've fated themselves to this situation.

Many times, those who are being exploited were already being abused in the home to begin with, sexually abused. So, their self-identity becomes wrapped up in this must be the only place where I find value. Really, that's how exploiters are looking for those types of people, low self-esteem, that they can take advantage of. That's why they never get out. There are those pimps who would use force to keep somebody in, different times during this grooming process use force to let them know that pain is involved should they cross the trafficker. But oftentimes, the chains really are more tied to emotional bondage than they are any physical threats.

Dr. Darrell Bock  Another phrase that I've seen is what's called the Stockholm syndrome. Can you explain what that is?

Mike Bartel  Yeah, Stockholm syndrome at its basis is really just when the person who's being exploited actually develops emotional attachment to the person who is abusing them. We've seen that happen. You might have seen the Elizabeth Smart case from a few years ago where after a while the person who was exploiting Elizabeth Smart didn't have to do anything. She was a willing participant, so to speak, in his travels. Where he went she followed him because she developed an emotional attachment to her captor.
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It's a psychological issue that needs to be addressed in a professional context. That's what happens with a lot of those, not a dissimilar situation, just say a battered woman who's been in a marriage for 25 years and there's never been a day where she hasn't been abused. Yet she continues to stay in that marriage and that relationship because of that emotional tie to the person who's doing that abuse.

Dr. Darrell Bock

Darlene, you suggested that from a law enforcement standpoint, this is a difficult thing to get your eyes around and for law enforcement people to catch. Part of what is needed is people who are aware of what's going on around them and can sense when this might be going on. Are there clues that people can be given to perhaps be aware that this might be going on and it's something that's worth alerting law enforcement about or reporting?

Darlene Line

The usual clues, when in doubt, people don't always think, well, it can't happen in my neighborhood. They might be in some place that is very quiet and sedate. That's a fallacy because it can be happening in your very community and it be under your nose and you might not even see it. Sure, we know about places where there could be "brothels, massage parlors, nail places, etc."

But again, the big issue is that sometimes these people do not identify themselves even as victims. They don't trust law enforcement. They've been brainwashed into fearing, with their identity, they've been brainwashed into who to trust. So, without the victim being identified, it's also very difficult. Even today, there are only 39 states in the USA that have the laws – because it's constantly changing.

For instance, you can have – we do a say something assembly with F.R.E.E. International and there's another typecast of a person that could be attending high school and all of a sudden the grades drop. Then, people are snickering and saying, well, gee, their grades are no longer good. The teacher is saying, ah, used to be a good student. How does she afford that nice designer bag?

That's why when we're promoting this particular assembly it's to let the kids know, hey, say something. This could be your sister. This could be your daughter. This could be your niece. This is a person who's going home and sleeping at home in their household every night and is a victim of trafficking.
We've seen that even just in this last Super Bowl with this powerful assembly, and Mike will get into it more, where it's a way that the communities and the schools are allowing F.R.E.E. to go in and have this say something assembly. Now, we're on a waiting list to get into different places because Governor Christie was behind it and the attorney general. These are just ways to educate people and kids, hey, there's something wrong. Don't just make fun of this person. Don't just call them a name. Say something to someone because we need these eyes and ears.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**

Let's talk about what you all do. You've alluded to where the name F.R.E.E. comes from – find, rescue, embrace and empower. I think the way I want to do this is, on the one hand, to go through some scenarios and to talk about certain settings where these kinds of things are certainly going on. As well as, talk about the kind of process that you go through. Let's work through the find, rescue, embrace, empower first and kind of an overview. Then, we'll take a look at some scenarios.

So, Mike, what is the process that you go through when you find somebody?

**Mike Bartel**

First of all, the context to which F.R.E.E. exists and does its work is always in collaboration and partnership. So, when we do direct outreach, for instance, when we talk about find, find for us, if we're taking the biblical approach, the Bible says that the enemy is like a roaring lion seeking whom he can destroy and devour. But the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. I love where we're taking this podcast here. This show is, the reality is, okay, this happens in every community all across the board.

What does it look like? So we might be able to identify and find those who are being exploited, whether that's, like Darlene was just talking about, our school assemblies deals with the prevention side of this so, identifying the risk factors in a community so that we might be able to prevent those who are already vulnerable from being exploited in the first place. On the other side, where and how we do direct outreach.

One of the ways we've started to train the faith community when we first came back from India and how to identify and engage was through the Super Bowl outreaches that we do. We do a great collaborative Super Bowl outreach with a couple of other great faith-based organizations, highly competent people. This will be, I think, the seventh Super Bowl coming up here.
To go within Phoenix area this year, be able to identify areas of the city that are higher risk and work with law enforcement, both federal, local and state law enforcement, to really engage and be able to identify those who are being exploited. Whether that be online, some of our identification happens online. That's where, if everyone doesn't know the term red light district, it really deals with the high areas of prostitution or demarcated districts for prostitution. Really, online has become the key place for that.

One of the big ways we've worked in outreach in finding is in outreach to missing children. We come into an area and find which children are missing from that area, mobilize the faith community, the business community and other areas of that city to be able to find those who are already missing. They may or may not be trafficked but we all know they're vulnerable, if you're 14 and on the streets, you're vulnerable. It allows us this connection point to build a network within whatever community we're in. Whether we're in South Dakota for the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally or up in North Dakota for the big oil boom or whether we're in a metropolitan area like New York City and the last Super Bowl in North Jersey, how do we mobilize the community to explain what that is?

We are not vigilantes so we don't go busting in, in a bulletproof minivan and start tossing girls in the back from the strip club and drive off down the road. We work hand in hand with law enforcement because, even though we are missionaries and know a thing or two about this issue, we have not been tasked in our culture to play law enforcement.

Again, we've got great people like Darlene who are in law enforcement and are part of the faith community building those relationships so that as we identify within our church surroundings, the vulnerable, we can partner with law enforcement to get them help.

So, that's the find aspect is the different areas of that, both in prevention and in outreach. How do we identify the vulnerable to protect them from this happening? How do we identify the ones who are already being exploited? Work with law enforcement to see them extracted from their situation.
Before I turn to the R in rescue, you've mentioned connecting with faith-based communities. How do churches get involved in this? What can they do?

We took the approach with F.R.E.E. International that we recognize as believers that God chose his Church with a capital C to be his agency to reach this world both small and great alike and in these individual pockets of churches and church plants and faith communities across the country, really, across the world, we're already seeing this in front of us wherever we're at. It's just a matter of recognizing what's going on. So, we come in and we train. This is what this looks like.

Many times churches already have many different outreaches going on, whether that's outreach to the Hispanic population and their community, teaching English as a second language, direct outreach into let's say once or twice a month to reach those who are homeless and on the streets. To be able to recognize and identify places of contact within the community already that the church is doing outreach and to be able to add this layer of education and add the network that's needed to be able to get those help that are there. So, the church has played a pivotal role wherever we've worked because they're the ones that are already active in the community.

We're seeing government and law enforcement recognize that. I serve on a task force here with the vice department, Metro. I serve with the mayor's office, interfaith council on combatting human trafficking. They recognize that the faith community plays a pivotal role in eyes and ears on the ground of what's going on. It's in developing those networks but allowing the church to play the lead role in the relationship building they already have going on within the area of the cities they exist. So, we're seeing them play an active role. They're setting up our school assembly programs within a community which allows us to also tie that church into a relationship with an education community of the cities that they're in. They're really the leaders within that culture to be able to put all the pieces on the table that are needed to identify this.

There are a lot of ways we could answer that but in the end we're just allowing the church to play a leadership role within the community they're a part of and resource them to do that.
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**Dr. Darrell Bock**  So if a church decided, hey, we haven't done anything like this. We have no idea how to do this kind of ministry and engage in it. What would be your advice to them as to how to get started?

**Mike Bartel**  First of all, it's just to get educated on that. There are a lot of groups that are educating on the issue. F.R.E.E. International has a large group of people and great board members who can come in and educate on that issue and really begin to, in a consulting type way, find out what resources that church already have to really engage in what area they are most effective in within that community already. Sometimes that might be law enforcement. With the education it might be after care. But it's, first of all, being able to know what this issue is and then, in a reflective way, identify what each church has, whether that's money, whether that's human resources to be able to engage in that community. So the first thing is to educate yourself on the issue, for sure.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  Okay, Darlene, I'm going to ask you about the R, about rescue. What does that look like in terms of how that gets done? What are the possibilities for how that takes place?

**Darlene Line**  Once the tip and once someone is identified, from the law enforcement perspective, now they're into the legal arena. Years ago, thank God that things have changed – years ago, it was hard to identify them, A, as a victim. They had the fear of law enforcement because that was just indoctrinated into their mindset. You're talking about very broken people and a very broken world. Now, when they get into the system and they are rescued, the government has a continuing presence. It allows for, as soon as the person is identified as a victim, their status is stabilized up to four years.

Before, there was this thing, well, we don't know. They're not communicating. Looking at them is just maybe women that were willing to just do prostitution but it's more victim centered which is very important because that's crucial to identify them, to get them that status and stability so that they can go through the litigation process. These laws are new. The problem is getting it to the point of prosecution. Every time you turn around there's a different thing that's there. Prosecutors have to prosecute them.
That being said, the fact that these people will be stabilized, that they can stay here and, again, I'm always going to shift back to the faith-based groups because they can put them in social services, put them in a home but when they come into a faith-based group or a home where they're going to get the restoration which we, as believers in the Lord, know true restoration and deliverance comes from him, we can actually see the transformation happening into these lives.

Again, the government is very short in this aspect. Once they're rescued, the big issue is where to place them when they're in this process. Home shortage and places, Catholic charities used to house a lot of places but there is a tremendous shortage in the United States where we're going to put these women while they're in the adjudication process. Just because they're rescued, now you've got a bigger thing going. You've got the legal aspect going. You've got all this litigation. Then you have dealing with their issues, their psychological issues, their emotional issues, their financial issues.

Again, this is where we see the faith community also. We've been fortunate enough and Michael will probably take a minute to talk about a home that we are about ready to launch for this purpose. This will give the comfort for these rescued people while they are in this process because it can be long and drawn out.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**

Before we talk about the home, let me go back and recover something. One of the ways in which I suspect that someone who's being trafficked is trapped is, in the midst of supposedly paying off a debt or whatever it is that's going on, there are a lot of drugs and stuff like that that goes on as a part of this. It also traps them so that they feel like they can be cornered with the idea of if you turn yourself in they're going to trap you on drug charges and this kind of stuff. You're going to be put in jail. You don't want to turn yourself in. Is that the kind of thing that happens that keeps someone trapped in this situation, Mike?

**Mike Bartel**

Yeah, that's definitely one of many things that happen. One thing we noticed over the years is, we've worked with this almost 11, 12 years now full time, is the old narrative was girl turns to prostitution to pay for their drug habit. So, drug dealers became opportunistic in being able to make money both off drugs and off the prostitution piece, which still happens because of their addiction.
I'd like to point out right away that by federal law that also falls under something you could prosecute for human trafficking. If somebody takes or exploits an addicted girl or boy or man, whatever, in their addiction exploits them that becomes part of the human trafficking law as well.

More times than not, what they're finding are the drugs come after the exploitation. They turn to drugs to self-medicate because of what their lives have become, what they're forced to do, being raped multiple times a day like they are. It just becomes a vicious cycle and the drugs can definitely play a part in that.

Oftentimes, girls, boys and men are asked to perform other crimes that then the exploiter uses to put them on the hook for, even though they were put up to it by their pimp, by their trafficker. So, it just becomes a vicious cycle, as Darlene said, they don't trust law enforcement already and if they've got their own rap sheet or multiple arrests that have happened for other things in the past, it just keeps them more and more tied to their exploiter.