

What is Commercial Sexual Exploitation?

Commercial sexual exploitation is sexual abuse where any form of compensation (money, drugs, shelter, food, clothing, or anything of monetary value) is exchanged for a sex act. While the term is often used in reference to child victims, commercial sexual exploitation is a term that can be used to refer to anyone who is victimized by the sex trade including men, women and children exploited through sex trafficking, prostitution, pornography, stripping/exotic clubs, and sex tourism.

Some argue that those in the sex trade “choose” to be there. However, most of those victimized by the sex trade are there as a result of force, fraud, coercion or circumstance.

The runaway youth who has nowhere to sleep.

The single mother who is unable to provide food for her children.

The impoverished child who is sold by her family.

The lonely woman who is targeted by a smooth talking pimp.

They all deserve compassion and hope. They are each loved and valued by God.

February 18-21: A prayer of preparation

Almighty Savior, I come to you overwhelmed by the sins and the hurt of this world. This Lenten season I pray for you to open my eyes to see the injustices being suffered by your children, soften my heart to feel compassion for your loved ones who are ensnared in commercial sexual exploitation, and prepare my body so I am prepared to act for justice in the ways you have and will continue to call me.

Jeremiah 22:3 (CEV) “Innocent people have become victims of violence, and some of them have even been killed. But now I command you to do what is right and see that justice is done. Rescue everyone who has suffered from injustice.”

February 22-28: A prayer for victims around the world

Lord, I pray for each individual being exploited and trafficked throughout the world. You know each one by name, and I ask you to provide them comfort, safety and hope. Protect their bodies as they are abused and exposed to dangers. Protect their minds as they are fed lies by traffickers and as they wonder where help is. Protect their hearts as they may lose hope in humanity and in you. Please give them a sense of peace and prepare for them a pathway to safety.

Psalms 82: 3,4 (NIV) “Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

March 1-7: A prayer for the vulnerable

God, I ask that you be with those who are vulnerable to exploitation. Be with youth around the world – those who are desperate for love, validation and supportive relationships. Please be with those who are susceptible to being targeted by pimps and traffickers – those who are impoverished, refugees and immigrants, the lonely and marginalized individuals. Provide them with a sense of your presence in their lives, and place individuals in their lives who will help guide them through trials and struggles.

Psalms 10:12 (NIV) “Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless.”

2015 Lenten season prayer guide:

Praying for issues surrounding commercial sexual exploitation

Developed by Hope to Freedom (RCA Global Mission and Regional Synod of Canada)

March 8-14: A prayer for the helpers

God, you are a God of justice. You have placed authorities in our communities who work for justice. Today I pray for law enforcement around the world - those who are in positions of power and authority where they can serve the oppressed. I ask that you give them wisdom, guidance and integrity. I pray, Lord, for those officers who may be swayed by greed, immorality or power. Touch their hearts and give them compassion for those who suffer. I also pray for abolitionists. Thank you for the incredible work they do to raise awareness, advocate for more just laws, and work with survivors to rebuild their lives. Continue to bless their work that they may be beacons of hope.

Isaiah 30:18 (NIV) "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for him!"



March 15-21: A prayer for the perpetrators of commercial sexual exploitation

God, I pray for those who perpetuate commercial sexual exploitation. I pray for redemption for the "Johns" who purchase sexual services, those who struggle with addiction to pornography, and those who frequent exotic clubs. We don't always know what leads them to commit such acts – whether it's sexual addictions, loneliness, a need for power and control – but I ask that you heal their lives.

I also pray for pimps and traffickers. It can be harder to pray for our enemies than for our friends or those we believe "deserve" prayer. But you have told us, God, to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute others. So I pray for those who exploit others. We do not know what circumstances brought them to such a deep, dark place where they harm others, but I ask that you heal them and show them the error of their ways. Just as I have prayed for you to provide paths of freedom to victims, I ask that you provide traffickers with pathways to freedom. I ask that you heal traffickers from the hurts and pains of their past and turn their lives upside down so that they may choose to pursue a life of justice, compassion and love.

Matthew 5:44 (NIV) "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

March 22-28: A prayer for repentance & forgiveness

God, I confess that I have judged those who have been ensnared in the sex trade – victims and perpetrators alike. I have looked down on them. I have questioned their decisions, not fully recognizing or understanding the complexity of their situations. I have turned away when I could have helped instead. But I ask for forgiveness, and I ask that you continue to soften my heart. Lord, I also ask that you forgive me for any role I have played in continuing the violent cycle of commercial sexual exploitation. Give me the strength to resist future temptation.

Ecclesiastes 8:9 (CEV) "I noticed all this and thought seriously about what goes on in the world. Why does one person have the power to hurt another?"

March 29 - Easter Weekend: A prayer for survivors, hope & freedom

Lord, we thank you for all your blessings! Thank you for those who have escaped commercial sexual exploitation – as victim or as perpetrator – and we ask for your continued presence in their lives as they continue to heal physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. We ask that you continue to place individuals in their lives to provide support and loving guidance. Thank you for your providence!

May this next season be one of hope, perseverance and positive change! Be with those who are enslaved today – may this season be the time when they are set free! Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Isaiah 43:19 (NIV) "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

2015 Lenten season prayer guide:

Praying for issues surrounding commercial sexual exploitation

Developed by Hope to Freedom (RCA Global Mission and Regional Synod of Canada)