



# What is the Set Free Movement's Stance on Prostitution?

As a modern abolitionist, you've probably had some challenging and even uncomfortable conversations with people in your church, community, or family.

Modern slavery isn't an easy topic to discuss, especially with people of differing theological and political perspectives. If you represent Set Free, we ask that you are sensitive, respectful and open as you speak with others about this heavy topic. Our posture is to uphold and uplift the freedom, dignity and worth of everyone, including those we share disagreement with. While our belief is that slavery is wrong, we are also committed to open dialogue and intentional efforts to make room for nuance, complexity and connection with others.

One of the most contentious issues within human trafficking discourse is about prostitution, especially whether or not it is ever a "willing" choice or if it is still "wrong" if a person wasn't trafficked.

We have three main beliefs about prostitution: (1) it objectifies human beings, (2) it rejects God's original intent of sex and human relationships, and (3) it is often influenced by adverse life circumstances and therefore cannot be considered a "willing" choice in these cases. Let's explore this more in depth:

**1. We believe anything that objectifies another person is wrong, whether that's racism, pornography, sexism, or prostitution.** If a person willingly chooses to become a sex worker, she or he is still being objectified and this is dehumanizing. We need to separate the "legally right" from the "morally right." Something can be legal and still be sin and destructive.

We see the reality of this destruction in a global study<sup>1</sup> of 854 individuals in prostitution. Equating prostitution with death, one woman stated, "Why commit suicide? I'll work in prostitution instead."

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdf/Prostitutionin9Countries.pdf>

The rest of the respondents reported many forms of abuse done against them:

- 89% wanted to exit prostitution
- 71% were physically assaulted;
- 57% were raped; of those raped, 59% were raped more than 5 times;
- 64% were threatened with a weapon;
- 88% were verbally abused;
- 49% had pornography made of them while in prostitution;
- 47% were upset by attempts to coerce them to perform something a sex buyer had seen in pornography.

**2. We believe that anything that compromises the covenant of marriage, which places sex within the boundary of the covenant, is sinful.** Prostitution is not “right” sexual relations because it rejects God’s original intent of sex. There is little that separates prostitution and rape. Prostitution survivor and author, Rachel Moran, says it this way:

*“When we understand that the sex paid for in prostitution shares so many of its characteristics with the sex stolen in rape, it makes sense that so many prostituted women make clear parallels between the two experiences. One woman described her experience of the sex of prostitution very succinctly when she referred to it as: ‘Paid rape.’ ... Another woman described it as ‘like signing a contract to be raped.’”*

**3. If a choice is forced because of life circumstances, it isn’t a choice at all.** The vast majority of men and women who “willingly” end up in prostitution were set up by past abuse or present circumstances that force a person to make the choice.

In the aforementioned global study of prostitution, 55-90% of those involved in sex work reported a history of childhood sexual abuse and 70% of interviewees stated that childhood sexual abuse influenced their entry into prostitution.<sup>2</sup> Other factors may include homelessness, colonization and racism, high adverse childhood experiences, alcohol and/or drug use, poverty, and mental health issues.

**It is because of these underlying issues that Set Free believes human trafficking and prostitution are symptoms of greater problems. Addressing modern-day slavery means bringing healing to communities that have been broken by violence, addictions, family breakdown, poverty, war, and other issues.**

We invite you to reach out to us if you’d like to discuss any of the above. We also encourage you to learn more from sources such as:

National Center on Sexual Exploitation:  
[endsexualexploitation.org](http://endsexualexploitation.org)

Fight the New Drug:  
[fightthenewdrug.org](http://fightthenewdrug.org)

Pornography + Sex Trafficking:  
[stoptraffickingdemand.com](http://stoptraffickingdemand.com)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdf/Prostitutionin9Countries.pdf>