

A Captive Set Free – Cassie Giroux



Cassie has been a valuable member of the Living Waters ministry team for many years. She and her husband, Larry, serve on the Reconciliation Ministries Living Waters team, and coordinate a second Living Waters program near Oakland University. Cassie has experienced the depths of despair, and the great love of our Heavenly Father. Her life is a wonderful testimony of the grace, redemption, and transformational power of Jesus Christ. This article shares her personal experience as a human trafficking survivor, and her reaction to the movie, The Sound of Freedom.

“He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives.”

Luke 4:18b CSB



There was a strange quiet walking out of the movie, *Sound of Freedom*. Fourteen of us from my family went and we are not usually quiet. We drove several cars, but my ride home was marked by complete silence. I am not sure what everyone was thinking. I thought that the producers handled a devastating topic with prudence, while bringing stark awareness to an unknown reality that traps so many people. I could not help but think back to when I was 15 years old and got sucked into the undercurrent of human trafficking.

My childhood home was a joyful place in many respects. My stepdad married my mom just before I turned three. She and I were baptized, which brought the happiness of faith, church attendance and regular prayer into my life. Everything was better with my stepdad, except for the continued involvement with the sexual predators on my mom’s side of the family.

My older sister said that the sexual abuse started for me when I was still in diapers. She hid in fear of these relatives, but I sought them out. I enjoyed the sexual attention, along with the cigarettes, drugs and alcohol that followed as I got a little older. It was a double life for me early on, as I was drawn to this wickedness, while treasuring the good from my new dad.

They often said, “Don’t tell your mom or dad or they will kill me.” It is cruel to burden a child with a violation and the task of protecting the violator. This severed my heart from the love of my parents and my church, as I kept silent.

By the time I was 12 years old, drug and alcohol abuse was a regular part of my life. My parents left no stone unturned trying to find help for me. At 14, they learned about a “treatment” center through a nearby church. This church endorsement was what my parents needed to cement their trust. They were unaware of the brutality and deceitfulness of those people.

I was taken 275 miles south to a warehouse. I would spend over 100 hours a week locked in that building and several hours each night locked in a foster/host home. Over the next 17 months I stayed at 27 different homes.

As a result of my first two escapes, I met men who offered shelter and understanding. It was as if they waited in the downtown plaza to help kids like me. This was my first introduction to sexual slavery and the making of violent porn. The silence that had concealed the shock, pain, sorrow, and shame of sexual abuse remained. On both occasions, I was arrested and returned to the torture of the warehouse. The third escape would be my last.

Returning home was not an option, because my parents did not believe the many stories of abuse within the warehouse. My travels covered 4,223 miles, in the dark underside of many cities where people are bought and sold. I could not help but be grateful while watching *Sound of Freedom* that I was not a little child like those in the movie, but I have seen this on our own soil. I have seen little children torn from their parents to satisfy sinful appetites and perversions. Parents were taken to sweatshops or farms unless the mother could be used in other ways.

My heart breaks when reading the attacks on this movie, calling it a “conspiracy theory.” How I wish that were true. That my young life was only a bad dream, along with so many others. People have told me as much. I often wondered why no one came to help. Why did these men, many of whom were husbands, fathers, and brothers, not offer help? Why did they not call the authorities or ask where my parents were? Instead, they took another piece of me away and returned to their lives.

One of my owners tried to explain this to me. He wrote on my heart like it was a blank slate. Some of the things that he said stayed with me for many years. His lies “helped me” to make sense of things. “You save marriages and protect young girls from sexual abuse because you are not a person. If they did this to a real person, it would be wrong, but you are a machine made for sex.” He also told me that I would never see my family again, never marry or have children, and that I would die young. When I could no longer hide that I did in fact become a mother, the child in my womb was stomped by his boot heel. My body had become a tomb.



As the hours and days passed, marked by disintegration and terrible aloneness, it felt as if I was getting farther and farther from home, and any hope of ever returning. It seemed nothing was left of me to return home anyway. I was a shell. When I started out, I kept count of my sexual partners. I am not sure why, but it seemed important. I lost track in the 400's when I realized that it did not matter; I did not matter.

Our Heavenly Father was not going to let the enemy have the last word in my heart. “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:18.

I was in Las Vegas, working long hours for gun toting thugs like those depicted in the movie, and God parted the waters for me. The story of my escape will not fit in this article, but I declare that our God is faithful, true, and His love is powerful! I returned to my family at 17 years old. They did not send me back to the warehouse. Several months later, my mom found a church with a 12-step recovery meeting, and I went.

Fast forward to 2012. I was married for 26 years to a good man, the mother of 14 wonderful children, a grandmother, active in church, and 27 years clean and sober. Something else happened that year; my stepdad adopted me. I was 45 years old and was thankful for my new life. Our generous Father let my heart be turned upside down until I could not take the pain anymore. This all seemed so ridiculous, like I should be past this, stronger than this, not to mention grateful. Somehow, God was calling me to bring Him my secret darkness and to receive my inheritance as His beloved daughter.

In my quiet search for the cheapest Christian counselor, I stumbled onto Dan Hitz at Reconciliation Ministries. I was embarrassed even to call. I thought this sort of thing demonstrated a lack of faith and a terrible character deficit. Not the first time I was wrong, and I am sure it has not been the last. God's loving hand was parting more waters, making way for more freedom. After about six sessions, Dan

released me and recommended Living Waters. I was not sure about gathering and working with people from different churches, but I trusted Dan. That was an act of God because I usually trusted no one. I went through two sessions as a participant and then was invited onto their team. I am still there, because there is nothing quite like the sound of chains breaking, The Sound of Freedom!

Words cannot express the change and healing that have come to my heart, and to my whole family. God's word, His power, and His love have taken on new meaning for me. Very deep wounds have become trophies of grace. He really is kind and merciful!

"What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the house tops. "

Matthew 10:27 RSV

When I think of my future, I think of the house top. I spent so many years identifying as a "freak of nature," and I am finished with enemy's lies over my identity. My heart breaks for others when I see this prison, the enemy narrative, stealing and destroying every good thing. I will speak louder, I will speak the Word of God, the power of His love to change everything. Jesus purchased me with His blood, and I praise Him and thank Him, out loud with my eyes fixed on Him.

If you have been objectified and abused by human trafficking, there is freedom and restoration in Jesus. His love can heal you and He uses the people who serve Him. There are hotlines for current victims and help from law enforcement.

I was set free from the foul residue years later by the prayer ministry at Reconciliation Ministries and Desert Stream/Living Waters. God has servants everywhere. Find Him, find them; find them, find Him. He has not forsaken you, He never will.



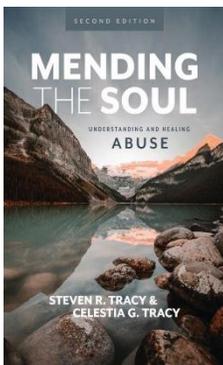
Cassie speaking at an Overcoming Strongholds seminar in 2020.

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

John 8:36 ESV

***If you or someone you love needs help,
call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888.373.7888,
or visit them online at www.humantraffickinghotline.org.
You can also text 233733.***

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Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse, 2nd Edition, by Steven R. Tracey, PhD., is an excellent resource for men and women who are overcoming all forms of abuse. Tracey offers an in-depth look at the many dynamics and negative effects of abuse and offers biblically based, practical insights for recovery. The second edition of this book was released in April 2023, and includes information for survivors of domestic and international sex trafficking, those abused in the foster care system, refugees, and victims of genocide. The book also includes a list of helpful resources including books, websites, and organizations. You can purchase the book at www.mendingthesoul.org. A workbook is available.