

Oklahoma: Looking into the eyes of a victim

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If you've ever wondered what it would be like to look into the eyes of a sex slave, I can tell you exactly how it feels.



Chelsea Bradley That there are 27 million people in the world trapped in slavery is not news to many of you. Human trafficking advocacy, particularly in the realm of sex trafficking, is a rapidly growing ministry among Christians of our generation. You want to put an end to it. You want to burst in, Liam Neeson-style, and rescue these innocent victims before leading them to salvation in one powerful, moving prayer. I know this, because it was my dream once.

Unfortunately, working at a shelter for domestic violence and sex trafficking survivors has taken my action-packed plans and placed them firmly in reality. And reality is hard to swallow.

The women here are not vapid teenagers who took off for a trip to Europe and were dragged into a van at the airport. They are not destitute villagers tricked into taking jobs in unfamiliar countries to support their families. They are women, just like me, just like your sisters and girlfriends and

wives and daughters and mothers, who have experienced unspeakable horror in the middle of our country, in broad daylight, for months and sometimes years. And fighting trafficking, I am learning, looks more like serving a warm meal and offering a word of encouragement than defeating bad guys.

Their stories

I have listened intently as a young, fresh-faced, 20-something girl described being forced to service 40 or more men per week for her brutal pimp. Another woman, equipped with a quirky and dark sense of humor, explained she had been arrested for prostitution in multiple states as a sex trafficking victim, as though she were describing what she'd had for lunch that day. A third woman, who avoids eye contact and suffers from terrible nightmares, was sold as a child by her mother and father.

I have looked at these women—beautiful, intelligent women—and seen the ghosts in their eyes. They live every moment on the verge of a flashback, tip-toeing through day-to-day life as though one wrong step might send them spiraling into a panic attack. These are women who could have been students in my college classes or members of my Bible study group, but instead they were abused, taken advantage of, and left with nothing.

Hope in the midst of despair

And yet, beneath so much despair, there is hope. The Bible says, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). The women here have shown me what it is to *truly* abide in the Lord's light through trials. Their faith has remained, even though their bodies have walked through hell.

Faithfully they work hard at the jobs God has provided for them. Faithfully they serve the safe haven the Lord brought them to by supporting their fellow guests and cleaning the building. Faithfully they believe God will

bring good from what the enemy intended for evil.

Theirs is the kind of faith I pray for daily, and am experiencing little by little with every moment I spend here. Each day they wake up and face a new sunrise, they are embracing freedom in Christ.

Chelsea Bradley, a student at Tarleton State University, is serving with [Go Now Missions](#) in Oklahoma at a shelter for survivors of domestic abuse and human trafficking.