

# Unfavorable Odds

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## Episode 17: In Pursuit of Love

Guest: Rebecca Bender  
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**Kim:** From the FamilyLife podcast network, this is *Unfavorable Odds*. I'm Kim Anthony.

*Unfavorable Odds* is all about finding hope and help in those seasons of life when things get pretty difficult. Jesus has promised us that whenever we walk through those dark tough times, He's always going to be with us. So, on each episode of this podcast, we'll be talking with people who have learned how in those very difficult times to draw their strength from Jesus.

When I was preparing to interview my guest for this episode of *Unfavorable Odds*, I don't even—actually, I don't even know if I should be telling you this, but I didn't want to read the book. Because I knew that the topic was about human trafficking and it's always been hard for me to go beyond the headlines when there's a story regarding this topic. Because it just breaks my heart to know that there are women and children who are being harmed. But I got up the nerve and once I started to read Rebecca Bender's story, I could not put it down.

Rebecca escaped nearly six years of human trafficking. She's written a book called *Pursuit of Love: One Woman's Journey From Trafficked to Triumphant*. My conversation with Rebecca—it really opened my eyes to the manipulation and the deception involved in human trafficking, and how easy it is for someone to get drawn into it, and how difficult it is for someone to escape.

Rebecca, you were a single teenage mother, living with your roommates, struggling to make ends meet. How were you navigating life?

**Rebecca:** I really don't think I was; that's probably part of the problem. I think a lot of young people, especially those who are not raised in church, you're just kind of doing whatever culture tells you is normal. You're doing whatever the people in your

immediate circle are doing and you're just trying to live your best life—like that's just the theme—doing your thing. You're not really thinking about long term consequence or building into something for your future. Maybe other 18-year old's do, but I know that I didn't.

**Kim:** But you had a roommate who had a job and she was making quite a bit of money and you were struggling and you wanted to go to school, I believe, and you're trying to figure out how to take care of your daughter and do that. So, you asked your roommate about this job that she had. What did she tell you?

**Rebecca:** Yes, and I had already been going to community college to get my pre-req's out of the way. So, when I moved to another city—as a community college, you don't have to transfer, right? It's just kind of if you're between semesters or trimesters. I can't even remember what it was back then. My aunt also had been a dancer. So, my family didn't really seem to care about that much.

**Kim:** When you say dancer, can you define that?

**Rebecca:** She had been a stripper; so, an exotic dancer. And then when my roommate started dancing as well, I think I had already been pretty desensitized to stripping since my aunt had done it and it seemed like my family didn't really care that much. So when she did it and she would come home with lots of money, I thought here I am on food stamps and trying to figure out how to live in this brand new city with a baby and trying to figure out how to—not transfer enrollment from community colleges but okay, so how do I get financial aid to come here? You know you're young. You don't really know how to do all of that.

So, she's coming home with all this money and I thought what's it like? She said it was just really like being in her bathing suit and it really wasn't a big deal. Because you're under 21 you can't be out on the floor with other people anyway. You kind of have to stay back in the locker—I don't know—locker room, I guess, would be the word. I'm sure that's not the right word but it's all I can think of right now. [Laughter]

**Kim:** That's okay.

**Rebecca:** Back in like the dressing room; that's the word for it. So, you'd stay in your dressing room until your *stage* name was called. Then you'd go out on the stage, do your dance and go back to the dressing room. So, it didn't seem like you were really out interacting with people a ton and she was making 300 bucks a night, which as a young, struggling 18-year-old mother, I thought "Wow! That's a lot of money."

**Kim:** Yes, that is a lot of money. And then you got to a point where you met someone. Someone you were fascinated with and you thought "Maybe this is the guy. Maybe he's the man of my dreams." Tell me about him.

**Rebecca:** Yes. When I was growing up in a small town, I really craved adventure and I know now that's how God made me, but at the time I didn't realize. I just felt like this really small little farm town was stopping me from seeing the world, and I wanted to get out of Oregon and just experience what I felt was real life. I'm sure I'm not the only person from a small town who's felt like "I got to get out of here."

**Kim:** Right.

**Rebecca:** So, he seemed to have all this ambition. He traveled. He had a good job. He told me he was a music producer. We actually would go to concerts and we would go backstage and rub shoulders with the groups. So, it seemed very believable. Suddenly I was transported from this small town trying to get by to this whole new world that I had never seen and was really excited and enamored and you also were trying to be cool. You don't want to be like a groupie. So, I'm not like listening in on every conversation to see if it's—I'll be cool. Don't act like that young girl that doesn't know anything.

**Kim:** Even though you are that young girl that doesn't really know anything. [Laughter]

**Rebecca:** Exactly, exactly; no, I was that young girl. What I tell younger people now is to not be afraid to keep your ears open. Even though you might want to play it cool, you can still be attentive and astute to what's happening around you and do a little bit of research. The internet we have now days has its pros and cons as we all know. One of the pros is you can do some research. You can look into things. You can verify stories that friends and people you are interested in are telling you. Use it to your advantage.

**Kim:** Good advice. So, when did things start to go south with Brian this new guy in your life?

**Rebecca:** Well my boundaries had already been pretty far expanded. Even though I grew up in what I would consider a normal kind of All-American small-town kid—I think even kids from good homes have vulnerabilities and so I had been desensitized to forms of violence at my home. I had years of poverty even growing up where I could remember what it was like to not have food and wonder—I never wanted that for my kid. I can remember getting teased in school for not having like the right Nikes for softball or something.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Rebecca:** I can just remember when I had my own little girl thinking I'm never going to let her have that life. So, I'd already had all these vulnerabilities from those lived experiences that when he took me to Vegas and invited me to move in with him and I thought *New York City* like that was like this really exciting adventure. Even though my parents had a check like something's not right here, they pushed it to the side and knew that I was in love and no one was going to tell me nothing.

**Kim:** And he was treating you well. He would buy you things.

**Rebecca:** Buy me things. Take me on vacations. He took a real interest in my daughter which made me feel like I, finally, was going to have this family that broken nine-year-old me had always wanted but that I wanted for my daughter too. I didn't want her to have the same life I had had. So, I really longed for a family and he promised me that.

**Kim:** But then one night he took you driving. You went to a place that you weren't familiar with. What happened there?

**Rebecca:** He told me to put on my best club gear—that we were going to go out to a club. I had borrowed my friend's fake id. I always joke this was pre-Jesus, so no one judge me. [Laughter] But we didn't go to a club. He drove me to a dead-end street. I can remember him pulling his SUV up on the curb and there was this deserted strip mall on my right-hand side. There were no lights, no signs.

He said he spent a lot of money to get me here and that was money he was using for his business as a business owner. I remember feeling really guilty. I felt like Oh, my bad; I didn't mean to put anyone out. I didn't realize. I remember also feeling kind of stupid. I should have known how much it cost to move halfway across the country and now I feel like that naïve young girl that doesn't know much that you're trying to pretend not to be.

So, I said "Yes, whatever I need to do." He said "Well this is an escort service. I want you to sign up." I said "No, that sounds like prostitution."—was very much like you're kidding. No, no, no. But he said "This is how it works in Vegas with dancers. You've been a dancer. Your aunt was a dancer. This isn't a big deal to you." That's the implicit pressure I felt.

Then he did say this is how it works in Vegas. This is how you get dancers direct to rooms. That's what when you're seeing these billboards and these signs about send dancer direct to that suite and the fancy hotels where there's like bowling alleys in your hotel room or basketball—this is how it works. I thought "Well, maybe, I don't know. I'm not from a big city. I don't know how these things work," and really, I wanted to trust him. I loved him and I wanted to believe that he had my best interest at heart. That this was still going to be about the family. So, I agreed to go in and sign up to dance.

**Kim:** Okay, how long had you been dating by the time this happened?

**Rebecca:** About six months.

**Kim:** About six months. So, you had built that trust. Well, in your eyes he was trustworthy. He cared about you and your baby girl.

**Rebecca:** Right. I mean six months is probably not long enough to move in with someone, right? But again, when you're young and you're in love and you think this is going to be the answer to all my really extreme problems. I mean you're a single mom trying to put yourself through college; there's some real immediate tangible needs and so I put a lot of trust into him.

That's something we tell parents about now when they're talking to their kids about human trafficking. We use the movie *Frozen* especially for younger kids. We say Hans is pretending to be someone he's not to get the kingdom. So not everyone who pretends to be your friend is really—or take an interest in you isn't really who they say they are, and any attempt to fast track a relationship should be a red flag in any setting including in *Frozen*, right?

**Kim:** Yes.

**Rebecca:** So those are some real lessons that we can use, and my situation was no different.

**Kim:** What did your life become after that night?

**Rebecca:** Immediately, I felt so much shame. I remember driving away from the first home that he had taken me to. It was not dancing. I can remember tears rolling down my cheeks and turning to look out the window so he wouldn't see me. I remember thinking "How did I get here?"

I was a good kid from a good home. I was a varsity athlete. I had been accepted into university. I can't believe I just crossed a line of being considered a prostitute and I can't call home. I can't tell my mom. I was so ashamed that I had crossed a line, albeit coerced and fraudulent. When you're in that moment, you very much self-blame. So, I thought / made a bad decision. / got in the car. / said yes. I wasn't a grown healthy adult to be thinking "Well, this felt like a fairly coercive tactic." You just don't think like that. So, I just got filled with shame and despair.

I've heard traffickers say you only have to get a girl—you only have to turn her out once the first time after that it's done. I felt that in my own spirit. So, hearing that from an actual trafficker really hit home for me to think "that is how it feels." It feels like just that one time and after that, you've crossed a line that you feel like you've already crossed, now it's hard to turn back.

**Kim:** Can you help me to understand how that works? How the manipulation causes you to do things that you never thought you would do?—you never wanted to do?

**Rebecca:** Yes. Well, I think for me, it felt like it's this gradual slow expansion of boundaries, right? It's not like you go from A to Z within an hour. You're going from a to a1/2 to b to b1/2. It's this very slow gradual desensitization. It's almost like that analogy:

you put a frog in boiling water, and it jumps right out. But if you put a frog in cold water and turn the stove on, it gradually cooks to death. That's what this is like.

So, traffickers really take their time to brainwash you. They use cult like tactics to reward you for cooperation and punish you for noncooperation. Punishment, not even physical, but just threat of social ostracism / threat of taking their love from you if you don't do what they want you to do. I think we see this same kind of manipulation in any abusive relationship.

The difference with this is that the result is they're trying to make money off you as opposed to just control you for their own control. Although that's part of trafficking. For me in the night that I felt like I crossed a line that I was so ashamed of and it just went downhill from there, I can remember thinking "Okay, it's just dancing. I've been dancing. He's okay with me dancing. He represents dancers. It's going to be okay."

I signed the paperwork in the escort service and she specifically said—you know you're looking at the form you have to put your initials on every little line like any medical form. You're not really reading. Let's be honest; nobody does. I'm kind of pretending like I'm reading, and she says "This just is agreeing you're not going to solicit anybody. We don't hire those kinds of girls." I remember that making me feel like "Oh, he's telling the truth. It's just dancing."

So, we get in the car. We get the first call. He drives me to the first place. I went inside. Immediately it was this younger guy and I don't want to make this sound weird, but I think in my mind as a victim of trafficking we grow up in the same culture as all of you. We're watching the same movies. We're watching the same tv shows and reading the same books. So, we're also picturing kidnapped nine-year-olds with these much older sweaty men—like those grotesque scenes we've all seen in those films.

When my situation isn't aligning with that, I'm thinking "Well, I must not be being trafficked because it's supposed to be kidnapped kids in foreign cities with really big stinky fat old men," right? When that wasn't my situation, I thought why would I scream for help? I'm not being kidnapped.

So, I go in the room, the young man—he's a young guy, like a college kid, and I thought "Okay, well this isn't like the movies." I just started dancing and it did not turn into dancing and I remember just kind of freezing and thinking "What do I do? What do I do?" By the time I kind of was like if I run out will he get me in trouble? Will there be this big altercation with my boyfriend quote unquote who's waiting outside? There's all these thoughts and fears that are going through your mind. By the time I felt like okay, I know what to do, he was done. It was like okay; well I guess I don't need to make this sudden decision. It's over. Just get out of the room.

So, I think people forget that it's like you have four or five minutes. It's not like this whole night of abuse that you've got to figure out how to escape. It's like moments of time to

make this really life changing decision. Your brain just doesn't always kick in like that. There's fight, flight, or freeze and when we forget the freeze that leads to judgment really quickly of people's decisions. I think that's kind of what I did. It was like: what do I do? What do I do? What do I do? Oh, you're done. Okay, I'll just get out of here real quick.

**Kim:** Did you tell your boyfriend what happened?

**Rebecca:** Well, as soon as I got in the car, he said "How much money did we make?" I said something like 300 and something dollars. I started to take it out of my purse, and he took the money from me and he said "Aww, you'll do better next time. You didn't have sex for this, right?"

That's when I started crying and I thought "What is happening? How did I get here? And actually yeah, I did," and now I'm embarrassed to even tell *him* because I'm so ashamed of the line I just crossed that I was never raised to cross. I thought I just need to get home to my baby. I just need to get the money back from moving and then things will go back to feeling in love and excited. I thought that it would all be over after one night. That we'd get the money back and then we'd go back to being happy. It wasn't just that one night unfortunately.

**Kim:** This is a man who was telling you that he loved you. Yet he was selling you to other men. Did that ever raise a red flag for you?

**Rebecca:** Absolutely. I mean I think that's partly why I ended up getting involved in a different trafficking organization is he got sick of me constantly crying and saying, "This isn't what you promised me."

I can actually remember a time—We would get in physical fights quite a bit and a domestic violence call had been called on our apartment and I can remember once he slapped me across the face and he left. I remember just falling to the floor on the kitchen and just crying. I wiped my mouth and I saw blood on my hand, and I remember thinking "What more can I do to make him love me? I've crossed lines I never crossed. I've done things I swear I've never done. This wasn't what he promised me. He calls it the game, but this isn't a game to me. This is my life.

Later on, when I finally met Jesus, I can remember the first time—within the first few months of getting saved—the Lord brought that memory to my mind of sitting on the kitchen floor. I remember hearing the voice of God say to me "That's how I feel about you. What more can I do to make you love me? I've given my life to the point of being crucified on a cross. What more can I do to make you love me?" I wept because I would never want to give Jesus the same kind of heartbreak that I know I've felt in my life.

**Kim:** Before you met Jesus, how did you cope with living with that lifestyle?

**Rebecca:** I ended up using a lot of drugs and alcohol to cope in the beginning. I became addicted to cocaine by the age of 21. I was a full-blown addict. If my dealer wasn't around or available, I'd resort to any drugs—smoke crack bent over in the floorboard of a car. I can remember hitting my pretty lowest of low at that moment thinking "I've really crossed some lines." I don't know in our brain where we make these invisible lines, right? Like I'm not an addict if I don't shoot needles is what I kind of thought in my brain. But then when I'm hunched down in the floorboard of a car smoking crack, I thought "Wow. I really am an addict and I need help." So, I definitely self-medicated to cope.

**Kim:** Tell me about the night that you and your friend, Amy, decided to hang out. Do you remember that night?

**Rebecca:** Oh yes. Amy—what we're referring to as Amy—she'd become a friend of mine that was also being trafficked. Her and I used drugs together frequently and my mom had shown up to take my daughter from me. She'd thought I'd just become a drug addict. No one knew I was being trafficked. I don't think any small-town family thinks human trafficking, right?

**Kim:** No.

**Rebecca:** You think somethings wrong with Becky. That's what they would say. Somethings wrong. Is she on drugs? Is she in domestic violence? Everyone thought domestic violence because I was being beaten. But no one realized it was to keep me in compliance.

So, my mom had taken my daughter and I felt at that moment like I had no other reason to live and I tried to kill myself twice. The second time was with Amy. I purposely tried to overdose to kill myself. I just thought I just want to go home to Jesus. Maybe everything would be better in heaven. I thought my daughter is with my mom now, so she's safe. I just didn't feel like I had any more reason to live and I couldn't figure out a way out.

**Kim:** Now did you know Jesus at this time?

**Rebecca:** My grandma was a praying grandma. She took me to Sunday School when I was a little girl if I'd spend weekends with her. She was always in charge of the Vacation Bible School in our town. So, I'd go to VBS every summer. She would take me to AWANA. I can remember memorizing verses as a Spark for Jesus, Spark to light the world. I can remember that still to this day. I was like six and here I am 38 and can still remember the song.

So clearly it works. So yes, I had a view of Jesus. I probably was a little bit skewed. My parents never went to church. My parents weren't living for the Lord, but my grandma did. My praying grandma really made a difference in my life for sure. But they don't



teach you about Rahab and Tamar. They don't teach you that in Sunday School. They're teaching you much more age appropriate stories.

I didn't realize that Jesus loved girls like me. He loved Mary Magdalene. He trusted Rahab. He loves girls like me. I didn't know it. I felt so ashamed that God would never love people like me anymore and I was unworthy of being forgiven or unsure how to even change some of my behaviors or mindset. I just kept crying out with Amy that I wanted to go home. I kept trying to overdose on drugs. I eventually blacked out. I don't really remember how I got to the hospital. But I woke up in a hospital and they thought that my brain was hemorrhaging. That I had overdosed, and they wanted to do a cat scan.

I just remember thinking "I'm going to get in trouble from my trafficker." So, I ripped the monitors out and they made me sign an AMA/against medical advice—that if I died, they wouldn't be held liable. I woke up several days later in the back of a car. I can remember waking up feeling like I couldn't breathe like you're in a hot vehicle. I could only imagine how animals might feel if you're locked in a hot car.

So that's how I remember waking up just like [gasp] gasping for breath in this hot stuffy car in Las Vegas in whatever time of year it was. I don't remember. I never had any medical problems since. I don't know what happened. I don't know if Jesus healed me. I don't know if He stopped me from dying. All I know was the doctors were concerned and I woke up three days later in the back of a car healthy and fine and ready to get help.

**Kim:** So, who did you turn to for that help?

**Rebecca:** I called my mom and I said "Okay, I'm ready to go to rehab." I believe my mom and my grandma, maybe my aunt—I'm sure collaborated—got me a list of rehabs. There was a list of several rehabs that they gave me over the phone. I wrote down on a piece of paper. One of them was a Christian rehab and I thought "I ain't going to no Christian rehab." I remember saying "These Christians ain't got a clue what life on the streets is like. I ain't doing it." Nowhere had vacancy but the Christian rehab. That's just how God works. Everywhere, no vacancy, everywhere I called.

**Kim:** So, you went back to Oregon and you went to Victory Outreach was it?

**Rebecca:** Yes. I went back to Oregon. I left; I just left it all. I left every couch, every piece of clothing. I just packed up a bag. I left my vehicle in the airport parking. I just remember leaving a voicemail to my quote unquote boyfriend saying "I can't do this. This isn't a game to me. This is my life. This isn't what you promised me. I'm going to go get clean. I've got to get my daughter back." I think he was pretty happy to let me go. I was kind of the trouble girl out of everyone he had. Just because I was so in love and I was so hurt that I made that known. And I left a voicemail for my drug dealer that I wasn't coming back either.

**Kim:** Two people.

**Rebecca:** Those were the two calls I made and left everything sitting there and went to Victory Outreach.

**Kim:** And you encountered God there, didn't you?

**Rebecca:** I had a radical encounter with God that changed my life. I was radically delivered from drugs in the blink of an eye at the altar, which I know is not everybody's experience. I'm so grateful. You hear stories but you don't really know. Okay, that's good for you. That's not how it works in the rest of our world. I've heard stories like that and so to have it actually happen. I got delivered probably the first of 2003. I went into rehab December 22, 2002 and I was radically delivered within a few weeks of entry. So, it had to be early 2003. So, 16 years clean and sober—never desired to use drugs or smoke cigarettes ever again.

**Kim:** Wow! Can you describe what that deliverance was like? How did it take place? Was it just suddenly you wake up and you have no more desire to use drugs?

**Rebecca:** Yes; it was weird. I went to the altar for prayer at Victory Outreach Church. I was just down on my knees at the altar crying out to God "This is hard. I don't want to be here. I want to go get high. I want to go smoke a cigarette outside. I just don't want to be here at all." Just crying and asking for help.

My home director's sister who is a big prayer warrior at the house, she came over to me and put her hands on me and started praying for deliverance. Her prayers were so intense. They felt so powerful. Anyone who knows and has felt like a prayer warrior knows that feeling. I just was like "What is happening?" and I just felt this tightening inside my body, and I was bawling hysterically—like full blown—like snot coming out of your face.

**Kim:** The ugly cry.

**Rebecca:** Ugly cry. And actually, felt like I was going to throw up. I had these moments of feeling like I actually wanted to throw up. Tightness in my stomach/tightness in my chest like I was going to dry heave. I just shaking, shaking, shaking like uncontrollably. I must have been sweating profusely because I got up after her prayer and I was soaking wet from head to toe all the way through my clothes. My hair was wet like I'd just been in a shower. From that day forward I just literally never felt like using. I never felt like smoking a cigarette. I never had a craving ever again.

**Kim:** A miracle. A true miracle.

**Rebecca:** A total miracle!

**Kim:** Now, what did you discover about yourself while you were at Victory Outreach?

**Rebecca:** Man, there was a few things. I discovered a love that I never knew of with God for one. I had a real skewed view of Christianity as much as I had a praying grandma and a praying side of that family—who I love and adore. As a young kind of like worldly girl who liked to party and just craved adventure, I felt judged by them growing up. My parents divorced and that was really hard on that family. They thought divorce is so frowned on. My aunt will even describe herself today as a recovering modern-day Pharisee. [Laughter]

**Kim:** Okay.

**Rebecca:** So, I'm glad that she has also turned a corner. But I felt that growing up. I felt very judged and I thought man I don't even want what you have. I don't want what you're selling. I don't want your Christianity. It feels judgmental. It feels mean. It feels just a lack of love. When I experienced God myself, He's so not like people. That's one thing I learned. God is so not like people. He has so much grace. He is the most loving Father that wants to just love you and cheer you on right where you're at. It's not to say it's a license to sin, but He is expecting you to. He knows how our human brains work. We're nothing but dust in His presence, right?

**Kim:** But dust; yes.

**Rebecca:** He takes to us like we take to our children when they're growing. We talked about having our adult kids figure out who they are and watching that is so fun. But we even do that with toddlers. right? If a toddler starts learning to walk and they fall down, we're not over them going "You dumb two-year-old learn how to walk." We don't say that. We're cheering them on. We're getting out our camera. We're capturing the moments of trying something new and learning to grow.

**Kim:** I love that picture.

**Rebecca:** God just is like that to us I learned. I learned that every time I fall down a little and I mess up; I say something I'm not supposed to say; I put my foot in my mouth; I have thoughts I shouldn't have; God isn't there to be over me like an abuser or a cop giving me a ticket or punishing me. He is a dad that is cheering me on, taking out His camera to capture my moment of growth, and He's saying "Well done! I'm so proud of you. Last year you wouldn't even have been convicted by this." [Laughter] This is growth and He is cheering me on. So that's what I learned. I learned He's nothing like I thought He was.

**Kim:** So, you were set free from your drug addiction, but you write in your book that you still struggled with what you called trauma bond. What is that?

**Rebecca:** I think one thing about human trafficking that a lot of people don't realize is brainwashing is just how trafficking in America looks and beyond—anywhere first world country, I'm sure, that's not kidnapping. It's very, very much a mind game. There's actually a lot of research that shows domestic pimp controlled human trafficking meets every indicator of cult behavior.

**Kim:** Whoa.

**Rebecca:** Research—proven, years of proven research by universities—cult behavior. Cults are very real. We think in a 2019/2020 era that we would be smart enough to realize when we're being brainwashed, and I don't know that that's the case for vulnerable people.

I think that really smart manipulative sociopaths very much know how to use brainwashing tactics to make you feel that you're in this high control group. That it's us versus them. Your contributing to a family. You think this is the only people that really know you. They feed that to you. They feed you mantras that you are to repeat daily.

I mean I had several mantras that I detail in the book that we were told over and over and over again. Little slogans that we thought were funny that we would just say as if it were our little inside secret. But he purposefully wrote those, made those up, and planted them in us to say daily. They're very crafty.

When I went into rehab, I went for a drug addiction and we didn't even know what trauma bonding, Stockholm syndrome, capture bonding, brainwashing tactics by high control groups, deprogramming—we didn't know any of that in rehab. It's a drug rehab and a good one, right? Like it delivered me, so I don't want to say anything bad about it because it did what it was supposed to do.

But brainwashing with human trafficking victims is a very complex nuanced psychology. Actually, you can go to a therapist who specializes in complex compound trauma or also known as polyvictimization that will assist you through deprogramming mental health needs.—like EMDR and other therapeutic models, but I didn't know about that back then. I had no clue. I just got delivered from drugs and thought “Well, now, my boyfriend might love me.” So, I called him to tell him about Jesus.

**Kim:** And what happened after you made that call?

**Rebecca:** I describe it a lot as the theory of Pavlov's dog. If anyone knows psychology or studied it at all, you ring the bell and the dog starts salivating. I felt like that. As soon as I heard my voice it was like “*Hello Master. What can I do for you today?*” It felt like this very bizarre instant I'm back into this trance with him that I longed to love and be loved, and he had the key to that is how it felt. It's hard to explain when you've never actually been brainwashed. That's the closest I can do to describe it.

**Kim:** That's very scary and even though you feel like it may be hard for someone to understand who hasn't been through that, I think for me, you describing it the way you have is helping me to understand why it's so difficult for women and other people who are trafficked to get out of that situation. Because the first question people say is: why didn't you just leave? Why didn't you just walk away?

**Rebecca:** Right. When we train law enforcement, that's a huge question we get is why didn't you just grab a grenade, bomb the bolshoi, jump out the window, and run for freedom? You're like this isn't a movie. [Laughter]

I have a friend—I have lots of friends who are trafficked now—a lot of survivors—we work together and she even describes her time when she kept thinking “Well the first red light I get to in the car, I'm just going to jump out and run.” But this isn't the movies and none of her lights were red. Every light was green, and the house was only a mile away and in a minute you're there.

We have all these preconceived notions as outsiders on what people should do, and what we would have done, and all of these ideas. But if we really take a minute to think about it, it's like where do I get that expectation of others from? Oftentimes, it's culture and media and if you realize that real life doesn't always play out the way it appears in a movie, you know that sometimes those aren't actually an option. Like jumping out of a moving vehicle at a red light is not actually ever an option if the light is constantly green.

**Kim:** Right.

**Rebecca:** And the house is nearby, so you didn't have that many times to try to get out.

**Kim:** Or the person who is trafficking you tells you something that you've longed to hear like: I want us to have a baby.

**Rebecca:** Yes. A dangling carrot is one of the most difficult things for many of us. That keeps us in jobs too long when we're continually promised raises that we don't get. Moving up corporate ladders makes people turn a blind eye when they might see sexual harassment taking place.

I mean we can add judgment towards I think, sometimes people in trafficking—obviously, I say that a lot because I hear some of those responses from people and not everyone's story is that of being trafficked. But I think all of us, if we're very honest, have had times where we have agreed to turn the other cheek because we hoped it would get better or we had put too much time and energy into something or we're eventually meeting that dangling carrot that we thought was coming. I think most people can say they've had a moment like that in their life

**Kim:** I agree.

**Rebecca:** It's no different for trafficked victims. We're doing the same thing. We're holding on to that same hope of it's going to get better. Well, she's—you just make up excuses.

**Kim:** Will you talk about how you go back to Vegas and things didn't quite work out with Brian as you hoped?

**Rebecca:** Correct. I ended up going back to Vegas after being radically delivered from drug addiction, having a real encounter with God and filled with the Holy Spirit and I went back.

**Kim:** Let me interrupt you there. A lot of people would say how can you possibly truly know Jesus and then get yourself back into the same situation you were in before? How can you possibly allow that to happen?

**Rebecca:** I think a lot of us that know Jesus, we're still human. We still have areas that maybe we've never worked on that God has tapped on our heart to work on that we've ignored. The same thing happened for me. I didn't even know to address my issue of being very vulnerable to being loved and I didn't really understand my vulnerabilities of poverty, which was happening by the time I got out of rehab. I was back to being a single mom. I had got my daughter back and living back in poverty again and I thought "man, is this what you saved me for?" Like I don't want this either.

The enemy is real good at coming in and making you think that your thoughts are your own thoughts. I can actually remember the moment walking by a Starbucks and smelling the coffee and I remember having this thought "Is this how good your God is?—that you can't even have a cup of coffee?" That shifted/started shifting my heart and I'm like "You're right. Maybe God isn't good. Maybe God does keep us in poverty. Well that's why I was in poverty my whole life. Well maybe I won't be able to afford my daughter unless I take it into my own hands," right?

**Kim:** Yes.

**Rebecca:** And it's like these weaseling little thoughts that wiggle their way into your brain and begin to take root. I just picture this worm with an apple. That it wiggles its way in and the next thing you know the apple's rotten. That's what can happen I think with our thought life.

**Kim:** Yes; absolutely.

**Rebecca:** And I wasn't—you know I was a new Christian. I wasn't super versed on how to take thoughts captive and subject them to the Word of God. I loved God but I was a new Christian. I didn't have maturity in some of those arenas. So, yes, I fell for the lie.

**Kim:** And there was still a lot of healing that needed to take place within you.

**Rebecca:** There were roots for sure. I mean that's why we named the book *Pursuit of Love*, right? It's like looking for love in all the wrong places and trying to make things fit in that hole of my heart that actually had always been intended for only God. And that's why those puzzle pieces never fit because it wasn't the right fit. But filling it with everything else: drugs, partying, dudes, falling for the lie that culture feeds us that if you're sexy or empowered. That seems to be our culture's only way of making women think they are empowered or powerful is if you're desired. I'm not saying the church does that, but our world definitely does that to young women.

**Kim:** We see it all the time.

**Rebecca:** Constantly and so I felt like that, too. I was just a new Christian. I didn't know. So, I went back thinking that it would be different this time because I was no longer on drugs. That I'd finally have that family and be taken care of that I was really lacking still.

**Kim:** You mentioned family several times in your story and how that was very important in the trafficking world especially the world that you were in. Talk about wife-in-laws; explain what that is.

**Rebecca:** Yes. So, I end up going back to Vegas. Brian shows me that he is not as interested as I thought. It's becoming very obvious that "Oh, you don't actually love me. You're really using me."

I think once the drugs were gone, I felt like I could actually see clearly. Before it was just this fog of trying to view emotions through drug addiction. You know I don't even need to explain that. Most people can imagine. But now I didn't have that and so it was really clear like oh, you're using me. Wow! Like now it's finally all coming together, which is sad that it took that long for me to get it.

But I met a young woman that I had been signed up at the same escort service with and she recruited me which is another lingo that's used in this organized crime world that basically means to be traded and sold between traffickers. It's called choosing up or you're forced to recruit new victims. That's part of your requirement in the home by most traffickers.

So, she recruited me, and I chose up and her trafficker has to basically tell my trafficker that I'm his now and bla bla bla. The way I describe it in the book is we talk about it like you wouldn't be in a gang and go "I'm sorry bloods. This was way more than I thought. I'm really sorry. I'm just going to go home. But don't worry, I'm not going to tell anyone all of the details." And to think that they'd be "Okay, well great. We trust you. Take care." Like that would never happen.

So, it's very similar with traffickers. You're kind of like these little mini gangs and you can't just up and walk away. But if you change gangs, you kind of have the protection of the new gang from the old gang. So it becomes this feeling of I might not be able to get

completely out but maybe I could go to a better one and they could protect me and eventually, I could figure out how to stack some money/how to put some money aside/how to run in the middle of the night. That's kind of what you're always thinking about is how to get out.

**Kim:** And that's what attracted you to that next person who trafficked you.

**Rebecca:** Right. The girl who recruited me which once you're in the same family or the same stable they're referred as your wife-in-laws. So, the girl that became my wife-in-law, she had a home in her name and a business in her name and so she had me convinced that at her home people get out. There was already another girl there who actually was out. She was retired quote unquote—they call it retired. So, she wasn't being trafficked. She got to run her own business throughout the day. It was actually a pizza shop in Dallas, Texas. So, she ran that, and she had a home in her name. So, it felt like oh, there's a girl I can physically see that is out and not being trafficked. This other girl has this new thing going with her business. Maybe if I choose up and go with this family, I'll have the protection and then I, too, will eventually be able to get out and own a home and not have a mortgage payment.

So, you think it won't be poverty if you can have somewhere to live for free you know what I mean? So, you're kind of thinking in your mind "how do I get out of this?" This feels like an answer to my problems—the lessor of two evils. It doesn't feel like really either is a very good choice, but in your moment of "what do I do?" it felt like the best of the two horrible situations.

**Kim:** So, was this new place your ticket out?

**Rebecca:** Man, this place ended up being worse than I'd ever seen or experienced. So intense brainwashing and so much extreme violence. I'd been beaten so much that I've had my face broken in five places, a pallet cracked, my nose twice, my maxillofacials of my turbinates impounded. I actually had to have surgery several years ago because I wasn't equalizing when flying so I would have lots of pain when flying.

I didn't even know that this kind of abuse happened other than on movies. It was very extreme. I started to feel like I was going crazy. Living in that kind of fear really affects your psychology. I felt like this guy's following—I'd get out of the car and try to check my mirrors for—I was so paranoid I thought cameras were in my car. He would tell me conversations that I'd have in private. He'd repeat to me which made me think he was listening or following. He would randomly show up where I was.—made me think he had a tracking device. I mean it was extreme. I thought "I'm going crazy. I have got to get out of this."

I started sending money home to my mom little bit at a time. I'd send 50 bucks here, 20 bucks there. Because if too much was missing, then I'd be strip searched. My room



would be ransacked like cops were coming through it. If he found money hidden, you'd be extremely abused.

**Kim:** So, did he take all of your money?

**Rebecca:** Oh, 100 percent of your money every single night. Yes. I'd have to slip away in between calls. I can remember there's a Western Union in a nightclub called Drai's on Flamingo. Flamingo on the Las Vegas Boulevard. It's the only 24-hour nightclub in Las Vegas. It's called Drai's but that was the only place that had a 24-hour Western Union.

I could remember that's the place I'd stop all the time. I'd sneak in; wire my mom 50 bucks. I'd burn the receipt because what if I turned around and he was there. Constant paranoia like I literally felt like my mind was slipping away from me and I started feeling like I'm going crazy. Like I don't know how to get out of this. I feel really, really trapped.

I started one night I just remember beating my head against the floor. Like we had this marble bathroom and I just remember beating my head against the floor feeling like I'm going crazy. I don't know how to get out of this anymore. This was really extreme. Whereas before I was trapped from love—I was in these mental chains from love—and now I'm physically being abused daily. My brain is slipping away, and I don't know how to get out of this anymore.

**Kim:** Did you ever think about Jesus and the relationship you had developed with Him during these times?

**Rebecca:** Absolutely. My first time back right after I had left Victory Outreach, I can remember actually feeling like I could actually see the demonic a little bit in people—like their face is shifted when they would buy me. I can remember one guy having like I felt like these really pointy teeth. That's kind of weird. I know it might freak people out. That didn't last very long though. It lasted about a day or two and I must have grieved the Spirit.

But I can remember praying over myself. Victory Outreach is a Pentecostal church. I can remember going full Pentecostal like I bind the Spirit of rage in the name of Jesus and loosen the spirit of peace over my home. I would pray like that over myself while being trafficked and I just imagined that Jesus was sitting next to me in the car. I just felt like I don't know what to do anymore God. I don't know how to get out of this. I've gotten myself into some stuff that's real dangerous and I don't know what to do and He showed up again. He always comes through. I'm so grateful. Just what a mighty God we serve.

**Kim:** How did He show up?

**Rebecca:** 2006 the feds raided the Dallas home that the other victims were in there. They had warrants for my trafficker and the wife-in-law that had recruited me. They had

a warrant for their arrest, but they weren't there. They were in Vegas. So, at that point the Feds had been watching us.

They took the other two women in. They were hoping to build a case of trafficking against our trafficker in hopes that the victims would talk. But everyone was way too afraid and way too brainwashed or traumatized. So, no one would talk. At that point we learned from those women being released on bail and starting to begin a potential plea deal for whatever charges were going to stick.

We knew that they had been surveillancing us for 18 months. They had been badging our trashman/pulling our trashman over at the end of our street and taking our trash and digging through it for evidence. My trafficker at that point started getting very paranoid. Like oh the Feds are watching you.

Imagine that sinking in as a young person even now I'm in my mid-twenties which is still pretty young and thinking like this is serious like the Feds are after you. This is no joke. I'm going to lose my baby to the state. I'm going to end up in prison. I can't do this. I've got to figure this out.

That was scary, but I couldn't leave my wife-in-laws at that point. They had become my only friends. They'd had my back in so many situations on the streets when I'd be locked in rooms with buyers or arrested by the cops. I just thought if I leave them, they'll lose it all. They'll have no one to pay for their attorneys. They'll have no one to pay for their mortgage payment and everything, all their literal blood, sweat, and tears, would have been for nothing. Like I can't leave them now. So, I stayed longer than I probably could have because I really loved these women.

**Kim:** So, Rebecca, are you saying that you were trafficked to earn enough money to pay for all of their expenses?

**Rebecca:** Yes. Our trafficker was finally indicted on four million dollars of tax evasion for overseeing prostitution of and it lists out the victim's names on his court paperwork. Like that's not a smoking gun. It just said overseeing prostitution—of what else does overseeing do? Pimping, procuring, and pandering—that's a felony charge and he was not charged with it. He was charged with tax evasion, four million dollars, and that's what they could prove.

That should tell you how much money these guys are making. Anytime there's an opportunity to make money, corruption follows. We saw that in the temple in the Bible, right? That's why Jesus came in turning over tables. Anywhere there's an opportunity to make money, corruption will follow.

Sex for sale has become rampant in our culture and if we think there's not bad guys trying to take advantage of young girls who can put on a sexy outfit and they think that's empowering and then having some guy take advantage—not take advantage sexually,

although that happens from buyers. I'm talking about the traffickers. Bad guys are trying to make money off of that. They're making money off of girls in strip clubs. They're making money off women involved in porn industry. There's a lot of trafficking that happens in any form of commercialized sex because it is a place where our country is making money. Corruption is following.

**Kim:** Do you think that one of the main reasons our culture is promoting this empowerment through sexuality with women, do you think that is part of fueling this industry of trafficking?

**Rebecca:** I don't know if it's the point of it. I would definitely think it's an after effect of it. I think we've become so desensitized that we're not realizing the long-term consequence of hyper sexuality in our culture. I mean what I used to consider soft core porn, right? Seeing a Playboy laying out when I was younger whether it was in my own home or a friend's house. That is now our mainstream media. That is every commercial. That is every billboard. It's every window dressing in a shopping mall.

And if we don't think that soft core porn being our main advertising isn't affecting our four and five-year-old little boys and girls, we are fooling ourselves. It is greatly impacting the way people see sexuality as they grow up. I know the church does not talk about it and I'm not saying churches should. I know it's a touchy topic but if you're not talking about it, the world is.

**Kim:** Rebecca, how did you get out?

**Rebecca:** Well, my trafficker was sentenced to 24 months in prison for tax evasion. He had a self-surrender date that was coming up and he ended up violently attacking the little boy in the home. I remember rushing my daughter to her room and shutting her in and saying don't come out until mommy comes and gets you.

Then I called my aunt who worked at a domestic violence shelter. I told her what happened, and she said that's going to happen to your little girl. I said no, no, he loves her. She said, "she's seven and compliant and at 15 when she talks back for the first time that will happen to your little girl." That hit me. I knew she was right. I knew as soon as you disrespected or said something you weren't supposed to say that you would be hurt.

So, I packed up everything I could as soon as he left to go tell his mom he was going to prison for tax evasion and I grabbed my girl and ran. I asked my mom to put our plane tickets on her credit card which she of course did. But it made me think later on when I started getting involved in the anti-trafficking work—it made me think about all the young women or young people out there who don't have a mom to call.

A huge percentage of trafficked people in our country come from foster care. In my state—in the state of Oregon, 95% of trafficked teens have been in foster care since

age two. They don't have anyone to call. They don't have anywhere to go, and I think that's why anti trafficking efforts are so valuable. Because there are people who want to run. There are people who need to run and have a moment when they can, but they don't know who to call and they don't know where to go. We need the people of God to rise up and help become defenders and protectors of our widow and our orphans, right?

**Kim:** So, for those young women who are listening right now who are being trafficked, where should they go? What should they do? If they don't have a family or a mother to call.

**Rebecca:** If someone's listening that's being trafficked right now, I would tell you you're not alone. You don't have to live like this. There are actually hundreds if not thousands of advocates out there right now in this army to fight sex for sale that have been fighting for you, that value you, that know you're important and you're loved, and there's resources.

I know it's hard but just like grab your suitcase and run, man, and call the 1-800 human trafficking hotline, which is 1-888-373-7888. And if there's churches and individuals out there that want to get in the fight to fight human trafficking, we have a great place you can start on our website. It's called Find Your Lane: How to Identify your Place in the Human Trafficking Movement. It's a free download—an eCourse that helps take this really giant elephant and break it down into nine bitesize chunks. It's a risk of oversimplifying a very complex issue. But if this has pulled at your heart and you want to get involved and you don't know where to start, that is where we want you to start.

Take the quiz. Download/watch the video and hopefully, it will help point you in a direction. Because there's many ways to fight this. We all can't do it all, but we all need each other.

**Kim:** Rebecca, will you give that number one more time

**Rebecca:** Yes, the human trafficking hotline 1-888-373-7888. You can also text HELP to BEFREE.

**Kim:** BEFREE

**Rebecca:** Yes. If you're unable to make a phone call, you can go in through text support or even through social media direct message to the human trafficking hotline.

**Kim:** Rebecca, it is obvious that God is using your life to save the lives of others. He's got a call on you and you discovered that when you read about the poppy project. I believe you were over in London. Tell me what you're doing to answer God's call on your life today.

**Rebecca:** Thanks for saying that. It feels so weird when you feel like God's using little—you know it feels like "Yes, I'm just doing what I'm supposed to do. It's no big deal." I think that resilience is saying all of this can't have been for nothing and it's about fighting and searching to create something greater than before.

That's all I really set out to do. I just wanted to figure out why me? Why did you let me live when others have died? Why did I live through all of this? I felt like I wanted to know there was purpose to it all. That it couldn't have been for nothing. But I didn't know what that was and so I had to try my own lane which is why I think we're qualified to do the Find Your Lane bonus material is because I tried my own lanes too. I took in a foster trafficked daughter. I became an emergency certified foster parent for trafficked teens. You can read about that struggle in my book. Won't do that again.

We're all called to something and we all have a story to tell. It might not be trafficking but our stories matter. Your story matters. Many will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. Our testimonies matter. They change legacy.

You know the children of Israel had to—they were instructed to tell the next generations, to set up the festivals and the markers as reminders of what God had done in their lives for their next generations. It can change your legacy. It can change your city. Your story matters. So, I wanted other women to know that regardless of their past, their story matters. It might not be trafficking, but it matters. It doesn't have to be as big or as little as someone else's. That God has given you as story and He's done things in your life that He wants you to tell other people.

So, we started with just trafficking survivors but now we want all women to know that God has a call on their life and that He wants to use them for greatness. So that's what we do now. We travel around the country helping women know about/identify the call of God on their own life.

**Kim:** Oh, such an important work. It really is.

I have to ask you about your husband. I believe you were living in London at the time when the Lord told you that something was going to happen by September of the following year.

**Rebecca:** Yes. I had an analogy pop in my brain once that was like whatever you practice get stronger; whatever you exercise get stronger whether it's lifting weights or jogging or whatever. The more I got into my word and the more time I spent in prayer the stronger and stronger the voice of God became. That I could differentiate my thoughts a lot better from my own versus the Lord versus the enemy sometimes, right?

So, with that I was in London—I call it my pretty woman year—living with a man I was not married to who was not from the Lord and God kept telling me it's time to go home. It's time to go home. It's time to go home. I was like small town Oregon, no way. I don't

want to live in poverty. I would literally be choosing homelessness to say yes to God. That was a really scary jump. I think it's hard for people to imagine. Well why wouldn't you just leave? But it's like living in poverty is a really scary decision when you're in a really comfortable financial setting.

The Lord just kept eating at me and I would argue back: well where would I work? The recession had just hit. Everyone was getting laid off in our small town. Where would I live? My parents lived way out in the country. There's no public bus systems. I'd have nowhere in town to be able to walk. Who would I date? I'm in my 20's Like dating is a big important thing. Also, but what about helping trafficked women like I'd been starting to work with trafficked women in the UK and I felt that I was being called to that. I just couldn't see how God would work any of those things out.

**Kim:** Right.

**Rebecca:** He said read Psalm 34. I didn't really know what Psalm 34 was so I opened up my Bible and it said, "Though the young lion may go hungry those that seek the Lord shall never lack any good thing." I thought "Oh, it's so hard to choose homelessness though, God" and that's when I said, "But who would I date?" And that's when I had the thought: you'll be married by September. And I thought surely that's my own dream or wish floating passed my brain. That's not an actual prophetic word from the Lord. I didn't think it was that at the time but in April, excuse me, February 22<sup>nd</sup> 23<sup>rd</sup> right around there—weird that I went into rehab on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and I left on the 22<sup>nd</sup> too. I have the stamp in my passport—that's how I can remember the date.

So, I came back into the United States and I slept on my aunt's couch and I got on food stamps and government housing and walked. It's really hard. I got depressed and I started going to church again.

I met my husband. Shortly after we started dating. I got a great job. Life was hard. It was different. It was a lot more trauma that I had to work through in my own character that was really hard to face. Like I've got some issues. I've got some major issues and that was harder. And learning how to be on a real tight budget. Like it was still hard. God was good but it's a different kind of hard.

And yes, it got better—six years it got a lot better. I'm just so blessed. I'm so grateful to choose Jesus even during the hard moments to step out and say "Come what may, I'll sleep on the floor, but I have to go after the call of God. I cannot live in sin one more day." I'm just so grateful that the Lord prompted me to do that.

**Kim:** What was it like sharing with your husband about your past?

**Rebecca:** When I was in London, I was like I said living with a guy I wasn't married to. He was not happy with me sharing my past. I think because it exposed how he met me because he had been a buyer, so I don't think he wanted me to talk about it. He was

embarrassed of what kind of girl I used to be—stuff like that. Because I'd had that experience though, on my first date with my husband I just told him "Look, I have this really crazy past. I was trafficked which basically means I was a prostitute."

**Kim:** On your first date?

**Rebecca:** Yes.

**Kim:** You don't waste time, do you?

**Rebecca:** I was just like I don't have time no more. I'm 26. But I just said this is my story and if you—God has called me to share with the world and if you're not okay with that, then don't call me on a second date because I'm going after the call of God and that's my priority. He said if God's calling you to speak who am I to tell you no. That was really touching. I wanted a man that supported me going after all God had and had brought me through and I couldn't sit silent about it. It burned like a fire in my belly to sound the alarm. I knew that I couldn't be with someone again who wanted to keep my voice silent.

**Kim:** Yes; yes. Through your years of marriage, has your past had any effect on the way you interact with your husband?

**Rebecca:** Oh, of course, right. Like I have a crazy story. It had so much impact. It still impacts my marriage I'm sure, especially if you asked him on the interview. He'd be like "Whew, let me tell you." No, I'm kidding. I didn't trust him a lot in the beginning. I had to reprogram my own thoughts.

I remember I would drive around and say to myself out loud "My husband loves me and he's on my team. My husband loves me and he's on my team." Because I didn't really believe that. I haven't really believed people were actually on my team. I always was a little suspicious, a little bit—keep you a little bit at distance, even married.

And just having issues with immediately feeling and being alone is empowering. I'm independent. I can handle it. I can figure it out. I can do that. I've been a single mom before; I'll do it again. Just all of these feelings of alone, alone, alone. But really created this false sense of independence that made it feel like ooh, I can do this. So anytime we'd fight it was just like "man, bye, I can do this by myself. I don't need you." Which is so unhealthy, right? Who fights like that? Apparently, only me.

**Kim:** No; there's other people out there. [Laughter]

**Rebecca:** I know. I'm kidding. Just people don't want to admit it. But that's where I'd go to right away. It's just like I'll do it on my own. Been there done that. I needed to get to a place where I said "I might think like I don't need you, but I want you. I want you in my life. I want you as a partner. I want to do life with you." That was really helpful for him to

hear because I had become really hardened and just an immediate “I’m out.” I had to break those hardened parts of my heart off. I mean literally I had that revelation like months ago okay. I’ve been healthy a long time. God peels the layer after layer. You can never go too deep with Jesus. I am still working on literally that alone conversation I had about three months ago

**Kim:** But you had it.

**Rebecca:** Yes, still working.

**Kim:** Now a major cable network is developing a new series based on your life. What’s the latest news on that?

**Rebecca:** Yes. Well, I’m not supposed to talk about much until the press release comes out but I’m really excited. Entertainment is one of the greatest tools we have to shape the culture today and God opened some incredible doors that a major network has bought the rights to my life story and we have an incredible writer who’s been working on that project. We’ll be able to share more with you as soon as that comes out and it’s cast. It’s so hard.

**Kim:** I know; I know.

**Rebecca:** I want to tell everybody. I’m so excited.

**Kim:** They will know soon but I’m excited for you. I’m so happy you’re telling your story and I’m happy that you are willing to share some of those deep things/those hard things that some would consider shameful because we need to hear that.

And there are women who are being trafficked who need to know oh my goodness, I see I’m going through the same exact thing she experienced. I’m in a bad situation. I need to get out. If she can get out, I can get out too.

So, thank you for being vulnerable and willing to share and I pray that this new series would be a huge success and that God would use it to impact millions—not just in this country but around the world. Rebecca, thank you so much.

**Rebecca:** Thank you. Thank you so much. I never thought God would ever use me. I actually can remember flying home and crying and just thinking “I’m going to work minimum wage the rest of my life but it’s better than this,” and so I just had to do it. I slept on couches. I got on food stamps. I got on government housing and I fought the thoughts that came in again that said “Is this how good your God is?” This time I fought them. I’m like “Yes lying devil, my God is this good.” This may be temporary, but God’s promises are eternal. I started really learning how to fight.



The book which is so different from the series—the book really highlights my faith journey. It's all about God. It's I think a really cool way the Lord's done this natural filter like giving us a kind of PG version of the story because the network definitely ain't going to be PG. We'll see what happens with that but either way people get the story whether watching something that's too mature content—that's too much for them which I get then the book will not be. The book is a PG book. You can read it. Your teens can read it.

I think it helps highlight to women that regardless of your past God wants to use you. But even more so, even if you weren't trafficked, sometimes we're in situations that we don't really know how to get out of or we realize wow, that was a really unhealthy way of thinking of my relationship that I'm in. Maybe I need to talk to my kids more. Maybe I need to make a change in my own life. I'm hoping it helps open all women's eyes regardless of what they're going through.

**Kim:** I believe it will and the book is incredible. I couldn't put it down. Well tell me one last thing and that is what does your family look like today?

**Rebecca:** I have four amazing daughters today. My oldest who was eight when we finally escaped. She is doing so good. I'm just so in awe of the grace of God and the protection that He's had over her life. I used to pray when we got out "amnesia in the name of Jesus." I'd lay hands on her.

**Kim:** Please don't remember.

**Rebecca:** Yes, and she doesn't. She doesn't have a ton of bad memories. She can remember all the wife-in-laws. We'd call them aunties. She can remember all her aunties. She can remember Daddy whatever we called him in the book Kevin. I think we named him Kevin in the book. She can remember him. She remembers lots of things, but she doesn't remember a ton of bad stuff. She's resilient and strong and she's so proud of me which is so great. I thought she'd judge me for being a bad mom for not putting her first—as a young girl strung out on drugs not putting her kid first.

I know a lot of people have. I see comments on videos I do and stuff. People judge my parenting: what kind of mom are you? Who leaves their baby with a man? All these hateful things people say. But the reality is I loved her so much. She was my world and in my own little broken 18-year-old self, I thought that a family would make her happy. I thought having a dad in her life would somehow create some stability that I couldn't offer, and I loved her so much. She was my world and that's why when I didn't have her, I felt like my life was over because I just loved her that much.

I'm glad that today she can see that truth and that she can say man brainwashing must be really real because she has said to me I know how smart you are I see that you are a smart lady and if they can brainwash you, woo then—

**Kim:** Look out.

**Rebecca:** —look out. These dudes are really careful and they're manipulative and they're subtle. I think we need to be more aware of teaching not just "stranger danger" but how to get out of situations you're in when you feel uncomfortable. I think those are some places we can start with our teenage and young adults is what happens when you are in a room and somethings happening that you're uncomfortable with? How do you get out of it quickly? How can you—Who can you call for help immediately? Do you have Uber on your phone with an emergency like an Uber

We've got to be more thoughtful other than just "stranger danger" because that's vary rarely what trafficking looks like anymore. So, I think making sure that she has those. I've probably scared her. She'll tell me like "Mom, I'm so scared of everything now. I can't do nothing off of college without panicking."

My husband and I now have three small kids so between the two we have four, and having girls is so scary. I didn't want girls. I got all girls. All I can do is just try to remind them God has a call on their life. One choice, good or bad, has consequences.

Remember who you are. You are a child of God. You are who He created you to be and I'd say their names. You're so & so and you are a daughter of the king and you have a call of God on your life and you remember who you are at that party tonight. You remember who you are at that football game tonight. But have fun. [Laughter]

**Kim:** I *really* enjoyed spending time with Rebecca. I love that she's using the lessons from her experience to make a difference. Not only in her daughter's life but in countless lives of others throughout the world. Something that stood out to me in Rebecca's story is how she described her life of sin as this gradual decline that led deep into this dark and dangerous place.

It might be tempting to judge Rebecca and say, "I would never do that." Or "how could she allow herself and her daughter to get into a situation like that?" To me the question is how do any of us allow ourselves to get into the habit of sin? And yes, we all do sin. 1 John 1:10 says that "If we say we have not sinned, we are making God to be a liar, and his word is not in us." And Matthew 7:5 tells us "first to take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

In reality, very few of us will struggle with something as dramatic as prostitution. But what we do struggle with can be just as insidious. An innocent relationship can gradually turn into an illicit affair. Fudging on an expense report can lead to full blown embezzlement. Surfing the web may lead to a relentless porn addiction.

Sin, well sin reminds me of what happened to my husband and my son when they were visiting Alaska and they went walking on some rocks alongside this rushing river. They

sat on this rock and it was just big enough for the two of them and they were just enjoying this beautiful view of nature surrounding them.

After a while, they decided it was time to go back to the car. But when they turned around, they found that the tide had come in and the path they had taken to this rock they were sitting on was now covered by water. So now they were on this island and the water was continuing to rise. They ended up having to walk waist deep through this rushing water until they made it to dry ground.

Well, sometimes, we can be attracted to something that leads us to make decisions that look fine at the time but before we know it, we find ourselves in a situation we thought we would never be in. And in a place that we boasted we would never go. Sin can be like that steadily rising water. It can trap us.

And sometimes, like in Rebecca Bender's case, there is no easy way out. So, we have to trudge our way through the rushing waters holding on to God's hand of mercy until we can get our footing on dry ground. Rebecca's story reminds me of Hebrews 4:16 "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Thanks for listening. If you want to find out more about Rebecca Bender, check out our show notes on the *Unfavorable Odds* page at [FamilyLife.com/podcasts](http://FamilyLife.com/podcasts).

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On the next episode of *Unfavorable Odds*.

**Ann:** Angela was our second daughter. She was 19 months and 12 days old and it was on a Monday morning and I heard horrific screams coming from right down the end of my yard and immediately I said, "No God, not Angie."

**Kim:** That's Ann Beiler, next time.

I'm Kim Anthony. Thanks for listening to this episode of *Unfavorable Odds*.

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