

“Makayla’s Story”

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This past summer, I attended Blume. Before Blume, I’d never really given much thought to human trafficking or to human exploitation. Yes, I’d heard of prostitutes but I’d never really paid much attention to them besides to judge them. On the first day of Blume, the leaders started talking about the “human trafficking business” and how it was the “second largest crime in the U.S.” At first, this really didn’t mean much to me. But as the week moved on, God really started to tug at my heart. He started to really give me compassion for people caught in trafficking.

Every chance I got, I went to one of the classes about human exploitation. I began to realize why many people are prostitutes. Before, I’d thought they did it “just because.” The more I listened, the more I found out about the real reasons why women do these things. Many of them have no choice in the matter. They’ve been kidnapped and are forced to work as slaves for their captors. Others feel like they have no choice. They are so desperate for money that they are willing to do anything for it. Many of them have children they’re trying to support, and with the economy the way it is, it’s hard to find a decent job.

It just really touched my heart because first, so many of these girls either don’t or feel like they don’t have a choice in the matter. Second, it reminded me how women are viewed a lot of times in today’s society: as objects instead of people. And it seems that younger and younger girls are seeing in the media and in their lives that that’s how women should be viewed. They’re told by the clothes they see others wear, by the music they hear, by the TV shows they see, that that’s all women are: objects.

At the end of the week at Blume, they asked us to take some time and reflect on what we’d gotten out of Blume—what we were going to take away from it--what we were going to do to make a difference. As I thought and prayed, I realized that God had really given me compassion for the people affected by this industry. I knew that it wasn’t just the victims I needed to be praying for, but that it was also the ring leaders and traffickers. They were just as much slaves as the women. They were slaves to their wants, desires, and money.

On the way home, I texted Deanna and told her what I'd learned. She immediately told me about the symposium coming up in October and told me that it'd be great if I came. I was super excited! I wanted to learn as much about this problem and how I could help as I could.

In September, I was looking through my copy of The Mag (our Acteens magazine) when one of the stories really captured my eye. There was a picture of painted toenails, so of course I checked it out. The article told about how these women paint their toenails a certain way to remind them to pray for the victims of human trafficking and all those involved in the industry. I knew that I had to paint my toenails as soon as possible! I came home and told my mom, and in the next day or two, I went to the store and got all the colors I needed. My mom helped me paint them because I'm not very artistically inclined. It's a great tool because not only does it remind you to pray for persons affected by trafficking, but it also provides a great way to inform others of the problem. It catches people's eye, and they want to know why in the world your toes are painted like that. And then you tell them.

I didn't get here until 11:30 today because I had my junior ring ceremony at school. But I got here as soon as I could because learning as much as I can about human exploitation is important to me. I'm glad I was able to come and attend the trafficking sessions and to hear the panel discussion. I've really learned a lot about human exploitation and how I can help. And after being here today and hearing all that I've heard, I pledge to educate people about human exploitation whenever I can.