



# THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

TO THE

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

  
**OneHope**<sup>®</sup>  
GOD'S WORD. EVERY CHILD.



**INTRODUCTION.....PAGE 3**

**CHILD SEX ABUSE ABROAD *ROB HOSKINS*.....PAGE 4**

**BRINGING LIGHT TO THE DARK PLACES *BOZ TCHIVIDJIAN*.....PAGE 5**

**4 WAYS TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL ABUSE *BOZ TCHIVIDJIAN*.....PAGE 8**

**SEXUAL ASSAULT AND THE CHURCH *ROB HOSKINS* .....PAGE 11**

**CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF CHILDREN *BOZ TCHIVIDJIAN* .....PAGE 12**



## INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse of children is egregious, seemingly more so when it happens in a church or ministry setting.

Working with children and youth, we know from research and experience that children are being abused. We have begun a journey that seeks to bring light to this dark place, put safety measures and recovery plans in place as well as begin to figure out how to advocate for children and youth who are being victimized.

One of our first steps is teaming up with [GRACE \(Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment\)](#). To help you know where to begin, we've compiled our most powerful resources to date to help educate and empower you to take steps to start helping to prevent abuse. If it has already been happening in your sphere of influence, seek out professional help to respond appropriately and begin the process of healing. As [2 Samuel 13:20](#) devastatingly portrays, the very worst thing we can do is remain silent and passive.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**About**  
Rob Hoskins

**Rob Hoskins** is the President of [OneHope](#) and Chairman of the board at [Oral Roberts University \(ORU\)](#).

He serves key global church and political leaders as a thought leader, ideator, connector and innovator in all things missions. He has a passion for helping leaders incorporate best practices, especially through effective [Ministry Design](#) using [Outcome Based Ministry](#) models.

[Visit Rob's blog](#)



**About**  
"Boz"  
Tchividjian

**"Boz" Tchividjian** is a former child abuse chief prosecutor and is the founder and executive director of [GRACE \(Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment\)](#). Boz is also an Associate Professor of Law at Liberty University School of Law, and is a published author who speaks and writes extensively on issues related to abuse within the faith community. Boz is the 3rd-eldest grandchild of the Rev. Billy Graham. He is a graduate of Stetson University and Cumberland School of Law (Samford University).

[Visit Boz's blog](#)



## CHILD SEX ABUSE ABROAD

— ROB HOSKINS

I have a 5-year ache in my heart for the Central African Republic (CAR). And it only has only grown worse with the heartbreaking news reports of sexual abuse of children in CAR.

What breaks my heart is that vulnerable children—forced from their homes, desperate for food, and seeking basic needs from safe adults there to protect them—were preyed upon. The utter helplessness of these little ones was exploited in the darkest and most heinous manner.

*“Children, who are among the tens of thousands displaced by the fighting... described how they were sexually exploited in return for food and money”* <sup>[1]</sup>

UNICEF admits that silence due to shame, fear, or lack of reporting prevent true numbers, but estimates that anywhere between 500 million and 1.5 billion children are sexually abused each year. <sup>[3]</sup>

According to UNICEF, the most vulnerable children are those living outside the care of biological parents. Whether it is foster children, orphans, or displaced—like the little ones in the CAR who simply wanted a meal and ended up victimized.

## HOW DO PREDATORS SELECT THEIR VICTIMS?

Vulnerability **100%**

Availability **98%**

Gender **95%**

Location **66%**

Race **63%**

Appearance **39%**

No special reason **25%**

\* Source: Hazelwood and Warren, 1995 <sup>[2]</sup>

## ***What can we do?***

One of the most influential pastors in America, Andy Stanley, says that every leader needs to ask himself or herself two very hard questions:

*“‘Who are you?’ and ‘What breaks your heart?’ Because you have no idea what hangs in the balance of your decision to embrace the burden God has put in your heart.”*

I know my friend Boz Tchividjian has asked and answered these questions. He is fully embracing the burden God has laid on his heart to be the voice for the voiceless as he defends children who have been, and continue to be, abused.



He knows full well what is at stake every time he advocates for a child. Vulnerable children are the most susceptible to abuse. Predators look for the vulnerable and target them. That's why Boz has recently spearheaded the charge for expanded U.S. and international child protection laws.

Every child is made in the image of God. Think about that—they all have the capacity for divine potential. That's why Jesus was so forceful in how he talked about how we treat children. Whatever you do to a child, you're in essence doing to God.

I'm staggered by the damage being done to these little lives. But, I grasp hard to hope, knowing the potential these tiny image-bearers have for healing and wholeness in the person of their Creator.

## **TREASURING HIS CHILDREN: BRINGING LIGHT TO THE DARK PLACES**

**BOZ TCHIVIDJIAN**

Not long ago the world recoiled at the repulsive news of French peacekeepers stationed in the war-torn Central African Republic sexually abusing young boys in a refugee camp. One account reported that the soldiers raped starving children in exchange for giving them food. It is almost too difficult for most of us to fathom this horrific evil perpetrated against the most vulnerable of God's creation—displaced and starving little ones. Unfortunately, we do not have a choice to ignore this dark and destructive reality that is tragically all too common in this fallen world.

According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 20% of women and 10% of men have been sexually victimized as children. With the current world population

projected to be over 7 billion, that is a staggering number of children who are being sexually abused. [UNESCO](#) estimates that the number of child prostitutes worldwide is between one and three million. As you read this post, millions of little lives are being eviscerated by adults who take joy in their destruction.



These perpetrating adults are not just French peacekeepers. Many of them are Americans. In 2012, over [62,939 cases of child sexual abuse](#) were reported in the United States. Keep in mind, sexual abuse is one of the most underreported crimes. So the actual number is likely to be much higher. One [study](#) found that only 30% of sexual assault cases are ever reported to authorities. Most studies have confirmed that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in the United States have been sexually abused by their 18th birthday. With [75 million children in the United States](#), the gravity of the situation is that nearly 15 million will be sexually victimized over the next 18 years in the United States alone.

This horror is not limited to the United States—Americans are now exporting their sexual abuse of children at alarming rates. U.S. citizens make up approximately 25% of all adults engaged in the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission estimates that over 250,000 sex tourists visit Asia every year, twenty-five percent of them coming from the United States<sup>[1]</sup>. If these numbers are correct, over 62,500 U.S. citizens travel to Asia alone each year for the purpose of sexually abusing children.

Most disturbing is that some of these American offenders are professing Christians, many serving overseas as missionaries. In the past 8 years, I have met dozens of missionary kids who, as adults, have come forward to report being sexually abused as children by missionaries while living overseas.

One young man who had been abused while attending a missionary boarding school never told his parents about the ongoing abuse. He had been threatened by the missionary school administrators that, "Africans will burn in hell" if his parents had to leave the field to come care for him. This child suffered in silence for years, convinced that he was of little value to anyone, including God.



Understandably and tragically, many of these missionary kid abuse survivors want nothing more to do with Jesus or anyone professing to be a Christian. One survivor told me, “Because of my abuse on the mission field, I absolutely despise anybody who calls themselves a Christian.”

I grieve for these precious souls who have been so violated and so betrayed. I also grieve that too much of the Christian world remains silent about this epidemic evil. Why have these dark deeds gone on for so long? Why has the Church remained silent in the face of such evil?

Sadly, such silence is nothing new. [2 Samuel 13](#) provides the horrifying account of the rape of Tamar by her brother Amnon, both children of King David.

Next to the sexual assault, the most egregious aspect of this story is the utter silence that characterized those who learned of the offense. When Tamar disclosed the abuse to her brother Absalom, he responded, “Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.”

Even worse is the response of her father, King David. Scripture says, “Now when King David heard of these matters, he was very angry.” David may have been angry, but he remained silent and did nothing.



As a result of the horrific assault and the subsequent silence by those who should have loved and protected her most, Scripture tells us that Tamar became a “desolate woman” while Amnon walked away vindicated until [his murder](#) two years later.

Dear ones, [the Bible is clear on how heaven feels about children](#). We are to actively defend the weak and voiceless—not just feel terrible about what has happened and brush it under the rug while we say and do nothing.

[1]Karen D. Breckenridge, *Justice Beyond Borders: A Comparison of Australian and U.S. Child-Sex Tourism Laws*, 13 Pac. Rim L. & Pol’y J. 405, 413 (2004)

## 4 WAYS TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

BOZ TCHIVIDJIAN

As we are constantly pummeled by devastating reports of children being sexually abused, we can't help but have questions. If these evil acts have been happening since [Bible times](#), why has the Church remained silent and seemingly unresponsive to these dark doings?

Questions are certainly a good starting point. However, simply asking questions isn't enough. It's too easy for many of us to feel like we have sufficiently responded to these dark realities by simply asking tough questions.

But in my experience, **questions that are not followed by actions are nothing more than indifference hiding behind a mask**. As Christians, we must embrace a different reality—a reality that propels action.

Here are just a few practical suggestions for how each of us can **move beyond silence and questions and take actions that will make a difference**:

### 1 TREASURE CHILDREN

Late American evangelist, D.L. Moody, illustrates the vast treasure children hold. The story goes that D.L. Moody arrived home late one evening from preaching a revival service. As the tired Moody climbed into bed, his wife asked, "So how did it go tonight?" Moody replied, "Pretty well, two and a half converts." His wife smiled and said, "That's sweet. How old was the child?" "No, no, no!" Moody answered. "It was two children and one adult! The children have their whole lives in front of them. The adult's life is already half-gone."<sup>[1]</sup>

Too often, we view children as secondary to adults. This devaluing of children often leaves them exposed to indescribable harms that have physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences. [Wess Stafford](#), President of [Compassion International](#), perhaps puts it most accurately when he writes, "Small, weak, helpless, innocent, vulnerable, and trusting, they are waiting victims for our simple neglect and most evil abuse. No matter what goes wrong, the little ones pay the greatest price." Children will never be protected until we learn to value them as God does.



## 2 BECOME EDUCATED

If we want to protect children, we must become educated on the variety of issues related to child abuse. This doesn't require you to become a child abuse "expert." It does, however, require that you invest some time reviewing good resources on the subject. Many helpful articles and videos I have curated can be found at [www.netgrace.org](http://www.netgrace.org).

## 3 SPEAK OUT

The more we learn about the prevalence of abuse, the more equipped we become to take steps to prevent and confront it. For example, find out if your church and any other ministry you support has a child protection and response policy and *whether or not it is being followed*. Ask to see the policy and have it reviewed by a child protection expert. **A bad policy is as destructive as a good policy that is not being followed.**

As we learn more about child sexual abuse, we will become better equipped to speak out when we observe questionable behaviors that need to be addressed and possibly reported. Whether it is the concerning behavior of an adult with a child or an older child with a younger child, we cannot hesitate to speak and remain vocal until proper action has been taken. Our insistent voice may be the one that saves a lifetime of trauma for a little one.

## 4 ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

Is there any reason Christians should not be leading the way in advocating for changes in the laws that promote the safety of children? Whether it's imposing tougher penalties on sex offenders or providing abuse survivors greater access to the courts, **we must work tirelessly to ensure that the God-ordained authorities are doing everything possible to protect children and help survivors.**

One practical example of advocating for change is a [recent proposal I have worked to develop that would create a much-needed federal international mandated reporting law](#). When Americans leave this country, they currently have no legal obligation to report suspected child sexual abuse. As a result, it is difficult for U.S. authorities to identify, investigate, and prosecute Americans who go overseas to sexually victimize children.

## 4 THINGS ANYONE CAN DO TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

- 1 Treasure Children
- 2 Become Educated
- 3 Speak Out
- 4 Advocate for Change

ROBHOSKINS.COM

This proposed law simply expands the mandated reporting laws that already exist in all 50 states to citizens who are overseas. Leaving the United States should never exempt citizens from protecting children by requiring them to report other citizens who violate U.S. law. As Christians, we should understand better than anyone else that **children who are overseas are no less valuable than those in the United States.**

We recently sent this historic proposal to various members of Congress in the hope to find some sponsors who will help pass it into law. I pray that it will become a law that will protect children overseas by mandating an end to silence as an acceptable response to suspected abuse. I cannot think of a more beautiful reflection of Jesus to vulnerable children around the world than for Christians to step forward and lead the charge in making sure this law gets passed. It begins with a simple phone [call to your congressional representative](#) requesting that they sponsor this proposal as a bill.

The Gospel is about an amazing God who refused to sit by silently when confronted with utter darkness. We worship a God who actually poured himself out to the point of death in order to bring light to darkness and hope to those drowning in it. That is the beautiful redemption story. This amazing and wondrous truth is the fuel that must propel each of us to follow Jesus into dark places as we pour our own lives out into actions that demonstrate astonishing love to His little ones around the world. A love that will transform a world that all too often protects those who must be punished and punishes those who must be protected.

Boz Tchividjian is a former child abuse chief prosecutor and is the founder and executive director of GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment). Boz is also an Associate Professor of Law at Liberty University School of Law, and is a published author who speaks and writes extensively on issues related to abuse within the faith community. Boz is the 3rd-eldest grandchild of the Rev. Billy Graham. He is a graduate of Stetson University and Cumberland School of Law (Samford University).

# SEXUAL ASSAULT AND THE CHURCH

— ROB HOSKINS

In the U.S. [\[1\]](#), child abuse is reported every 10 seconds. Neglect is the most common form of abuse, followed by a short margin between the next most common physical and sexual abuse [\[2\]](#) categories.

**When you consider that child abuse is vying to outpace the commonality of cancer, it must be considered an epidemic and responded to both individually as a believer, and corporately as the Church.**

Most devastating and least talked about of all social ills is the pervasive and increasingly predominant practice of sexual abuse of children. When sex offenders average a disheartening 50-150 molestations before ever being caught [\[3\]](#), **it's time for parents and the Church to start building hedges of protection around our children.**



Recently Dylan Farrow wrote a [powerful open letter](#) accusing Woody Allen of sexually abusing her as a child.

This is not an arena the Church is often comfortable stepping into, but the statistics and recent media attention this topic has gotten is forcing us to realize that **we must open our eyes to the facts and ask the question, “how can the Church help protect children?”**

Why the Church? Despite America’s growing distrust in institutions, according to a recent [Barna](#) study, the Church ranked highest when asked which institution they believe has their best interest at heart. And as the Church, we are called to be the shining lights ([Phil 2:15](#))—a shelter of safety and a place prepared to appropriately respond to allegations of abuse and well equipped to help facilitate a healthy physical, emotional, and spiritual healing process.

Since OneHope works through local churches and organizations that may find themselves in this situation, we have been meeting with [GRACE](#) to develop a strong call to action for churches and partners to seriously consider the plan they have in place to protect children.

We covet your prayers for continued guidance as we seek to help inform the Christian community on how to protect our children from the heinous acts that are happening right now and all around.





## A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF CHILDREN

BOZ TCHIVIDJIAN

I believe children are one of the world's most valuable treasures. I know it doesn't really matter what I think, but the Creator of the universe seems to think so<sup>[1]</sup>, and so must those of us who are Christians.

In [Mark 9:36-37](#), Jesus gives us a real life demonstration of how He feels about children. While doing some intensive training with his 12 disciples—those closest to Him who were to carry on His work—Jesus draws a child to himself and says, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me...” Those of us who are disciples of Jesus need to understand the implications of this lesson. For those who profess Christianity, our sole purpose in living is to glorify God—to worship Him in everything that we do. ([1 Corinthians 10:31](#))

So when Jesus overtly illustrates how we can worship Him—in how we love children and invite them to Him—we ought to sit up and take notice. And then take action. Especially because Jesus was pointedly showing us how deeply He values children in a time and place where children were regarded as slightly more valuable than slaves. Jesus knew this lesson was important then, and that it would be no less important today.

*"If the chief end of man is to worship God, then Satan's chief agenda is to rob God of glory by destroying His worshippers."*

**And who are the most vulnerable among us? Children.** Just take a look at our culture; exploitation, abuse, and the destruction of those I like to call "tiny worshippers" is vividly displayed everywhere you look.

Two-thirds of all people who embrace Jesus do so before 18 years of age. When we consider this truth in light of what Jesus says about His love for children and the dark

Satanic agenda, it becomes obvious that God's littlest worshippers are Satan's biggest targets. Destroying a child before they come to know Jesus means it is less likely that they will embrace Him as an adult.

There are so many dark, devious ways that Satan attacks those who are most vulnerable, yet extremely precious to Jesus. And that's why He so vividly demonstrated such a powerful love for children. Such an endearing love that he actually stopped everything in order to pay attention and speak up for the little ones. For His glory and for their protection.

As a former child abuse chief prosecutor, I'm painfully aware of the horrific statistics of crimes against children. There are a million dark corners and evil strategies being employed by the evil one to attack these precious, tiny God worshippers.

Jesus, in His divine brilliance, gave us the answer before we even knew we would be forming the words to the question.

**We worship Him in how we welcome, love, and protect the children.** If our love for God is demonstrated this way, it ought to convict and propel every Christian from every nation to expend ourselves for children, rejoicing that we do so worshipping our great and gracious God.



# THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

TO THE

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

  
GOD'S WORD. EVERY CHILD.