

**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM HANDBOOK****UNIT I Key 1****DESIRE****Purpose of this Key:**

- 1) Become aware of the difference between the Law and the Gospel.
- 2) Understand that in order to overcome sin, one must be transparent before God.
- 3) Recognize how sins of thoughts lead to sins of deeds.
- 4) Show how temptation is best combated with the Word of God.
- 5) Become aware of negative emotional states that are fed by lies we believe.
- 6) Understand that a true Christian is a penitent sinner relying only and entirely on the mercy of God in Christ.
- 7) Realize that the opposite of homosexuality is not heterosexuality, but holiness.
- 8) Realize that God can only be approached on His terms, not ours.

Psalm 37:4**Common responses:**

- 1) Some confuse carnal desires with the desires of the heart.
- 2) Some assume that if they fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law, God will give them what they want, or they will earn God's favor. They have impure motives.
- 3) Some feel torn between desiring to be closer to Jesus and desiring to continue the ssa/ma/tx lifestyle.
- 4) Some recognize that we are called to seek after God with our whole hearts and rid ourselves of sin.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) The desire of the heart is communion with God. By contrast, the desires of the flesh are to continue sinning.
- 2) When we understand that we are saved only and entirely by the mercy of God in Christ, we desire what God desires for us.

- 3) The Spirit and the flesh are always at war (Romans 8:5-9 & Galatians 5:17).
- 4) We can only overcome the things of the flesh by focusing on the things of the Holy Spirit.
- 5) Our sins stand between us and God. Confessing our sins and accepting His forgiveness brings us closer to Jesus. The Keys program is primarily about getting closer to Jesus.
- 6) To delight oneself in the Lord means one remains mindful that Christ has made full satisfaction for all of our sins, that He did on our behalf what we could not do for ourselves, and that He left nothing with us by which we could save ourselves (Ephesians 2:8-9). We delight ourselves in the Lord when we keep our attention on the cross and the Ransom paid for us.
- 7) Share with the overcomer the first of Luther's 95 Theses: "When our Lord Jesus Christ said 'repent', He willed the entire life of the believer to be one of repentance." Encourage self-examination and total transparency before God, Who is always gracious and merciful to penitent sinners (Hebrews 2:17-18 & 4:15-16).
- 8) If our motives are impure or our desires are carnal, we can repent and ask God to change our will to be in line with His will.
- 9) Successful overcomers have learned to live transparently before God.
- 10) We need to confess not only sins of words and deeds but also sins of the mind (Mark 7:21-23).
- 11) If we confess the sins of the mind, we can more easily resist the sins of deeds and words.

### I Corinthians 10:13

#### **Common responses:**

- 1) Most people comprehend this verse. Some have never applied it to ssa/ma/tx temptations.
- 2) Some feel encouraged that they are not alone.
- 3) Some, while recognizing that this verse is true, express feeling overwhelmed by their temptations.

- 4) Some have been told that they were born ssa/ma/tx and could not change, and they feel that their sexuality is part of their identity.
- 5) Some realize that they need to trust God to provide a way out when they feel tempted.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Suggest that they time themselves when they are feeling tempted. When in the midst of a storm of temptation, they might feel like it is going to last forever unless they give in. Timing themselves often proves that temptation seldom lasts for more than a few minutes if resisted.
- 2) Encourage them to get busy on something else, because idleness holds open the door for temptation.
- 3) Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:15-16 tell us that at least once in His earthly life, Jesus must have had ssa/ma/tx temptations. Some people are uncomfortable with that idea, but the Bible says it, so it is true. He knows how the overcomer feels.
- 4) He will fight on our behalf if asked. Our prayer need only be, “Jesus, get me out of this!”
- 5) Ask them at what point they recognize that they are being tempted? Temptation usually begins in the mind (Matthew 15:18-19). Share the list of Negative Thoughts at the end of this Key and ask them if they see themselves in any of these. Some will identify one or two, some will identify all of them, and some will add a few more.
- 6) Share Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 10:5. Suggest that they begin looking for and memorizing verses that speak against these sins of the mind. They can ask the Holy Spirit to show them verses that will be helpful to them. More will be said about this in Key 3.
- 7) Assure them that the issues of Resentment will be dealt with separately in Key 4. Many ssa/ma/tx overcomers have had significant hurts in life. Forgiveness is seldom like flipping a switch; it is more like peeling an onion.
- 8) Encourage them to confess to God that they have not always taken the way out, because they did not want to, even when the way out was made clear to them.

- 9) Assure them that resisting temptation is like exercising a muscle, that persistent resistance will make them stronger, and that they will like themselves more that way.

Luke 4:1-13

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most people comprehend that Jesus fought temptation with Scripture.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) The devil attacked Jesus at His weakest moment.
- 2) Being tempted to sin is not the same as committing a sin. New Christians may not yet know the difference. They may condemn themselves for only feeling tempted, although they have not actually given in.
- 3) The devil will also attack us at our weakest moments. He will often attack when we are feeling fatigue, fear, anger, shame, humiliation, sadness, loneliness, or low self-esteem, or recalling painful memories.
- 4) Some of these emotions are in response to triggering events, so suggest the overcomer become aware of his/her triggers.
- 5) Some of these emotions are in response to painful memories. That will be dealt with in Key 4, Forgiveness.
- 6) Some of these emotions are in response to lies that were injected into our minds during vulnerable times in our lives.
- 7) Temptations are easier to overcome if we identify the lies behind them. Sometimes we must resist temptation for a while before the lies become apparent. More will be said about this in Unit III.
- 8) The best way to combat temptation is with the Word of God. The Word of God speaks truth against the lies that were injected into our minds.
- 9) The devil tried several tricks to tempt Jesus. He appealed to His physical desires. He tried to get Jesus to prove something. He tried quoting Scripture out of context. He tried bribery.
- 10) The devil left when he was persistently resisted (James 4:7).

- 11) The devil was looking for an opportune time to return, and he will do the same to us (I Peter 5:8).
- 12) We should accept nothing on the devil's terms, even things that seem good in and of themselves.

### Ephesians 6:10-18

#### **Common responses:**

- 1) Most people comprehend some of this text, but many miss a few points.
- 2) Some realize our battle is actually spiritual, not sexual. Our bodies are not the problem.
- 3) Some emphasize the power and necessity of prayer.
- 4) Some realize we need to prepare for temptation, expect it to happen, and not passively wait.

#### **Points to emphasize:**

- 1) This text has been broken down in a number of different ways. Share the Pieces of Armor at the end of this Key, and feel free to add your own insights, knowledge, and experience.
- 2) We can expect to be tempted often. We are to be prepared. There is no excuse not to be ready when God has furnished the armor.
- 3) As we allow the Holy Spirit to renew our minds, we get closer to living out I Thessalonians 5:17.

1. On a scale of 1-10, how great is your desire to overcome ssa/ma/tx (1 is low and 10 is high)?

#### **Common responses:**

- 1) Some indicate high motivation.
- 2) Some indicate some ambivalence.

#### **Points to emphasize:**

- 1) If motivation is high, encourage them to praise God. Acknowledge that motivation will vary at times.
- 2) Spiritual highs and lows are normal. Strong temptations can interrupt weeks and months of calm.
- 3) Doubts at times are normal. Faith grows from struggles with doubts. Encourage them to read the Word daily, pray often, and focus on the mercy of God.
- 4) God allows the spiritual lows to test our faith, our obedience, and our commitment.
- 5) If motivation is low to medium, keep the focus on the mercy of God in Christ. No one should feel inhibited from expressing weak motivations. Help them to feel comfortable honestly expressing their weaknesses.
- 6) The mercy of God in Christ motivates people to change (Romans 7). Criticizing people with the Law will not help them to change.
- 7) Encourage the weak to read the Gospels and focus on Jesus. He is merciful and gracious to the truly penitent.
- 8) Ssa/ma/tx is a powerful addiction. No one overcomes it easily.

## 2. What are your reasons for wanting out?

### **Common responses:**

- 1) Many think that they must first “clean themselves up” before they can approach God. Some believe that God will only forgive them *after* they give up ssa/ma/tx.
- 2) Many ssa/ma/tx people project onto God the characteristics they saw in one or both parents. Many perceive God as a critical parent or punishing father. They feel afraid to approach Him and honestly confess their sins.
- 3) Some express fear that if they sin too many times, God will no longer forgive them, and they will run out of chances.
- 4) Some fear social disapproval toward ssa/ma/tx people.
- 5) Some express self-disgust over their sins. The thrills are no longer worth the pain.
- 6) Fallen church leaders are grieving the loss of their ministry.

### **Points to emphasize:**

- 1) This question often exposes hidden legalism.
- 2) We can only approach God as we are, and let Him clean us up, His way. We lack the power to clean ourselves up (Ephesians 2:1 & 4-5).
- 3) The Law of God only motivates us to rebel (Romans 7:7-19). The mercy of God motivates us to be Christ-like (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).
- 4) God is not a critical parent or punishing father; He is the Shepherd out in the hills looking for lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7), the Rabbi Who stood between the adulterous woman and the stones of the Pharisees (John 8:3-11), and the Atonement on the cross Who could hear a plea for mercy even during His greatest agony (Luke 23:42-43).
- 5) Assure them that we are all sinners in need of continuous forgiveness, no penitent sinner runs out of chances, the ground is level at the foot of the cross, and we must never despair of the mercy of God.
- 6) Assure them that however great our sin, Jesus is a greater Savior.
- 7) Feelings of self-disgust over sin are God-given (Romans 2:15), but no ssa/ma/tx person should feel more self-disgust than any other sinner. We should all feel disgusted at our own sins, whatever they may be.
- 8) Overcoming ssa/ma/tx in order to impress other people will not bring lasting change. Keep the focus on God's mercy in Christ. When we deliberately sin, we are stepping out from under His mercy, and pushing Him away.
- 9) Fallen church leaders need the assurance of Ephesians 2:10 and Joel 2:25. God will find another use for their talents.

3. When will God grant you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4)?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most people recognize that they need to delight in the Lord. They might not comprehend what that means.
- 2) Some realize that their sexual attractions are idolatrous and worldly.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Keep the focus on Jesus, Who made full satisfaction on the cross for all of our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21 & Romans 8:1).
- 2) Confront work's righteousness with the message of salvation by Grace Alone.
- 3) Commend any desires to obey God, live a holy life, or be of greater service to God.
- 4) Be alert to any idea that they must get married to a member of the opposite sex in order to be completely delivered. For some, marriage might eventually be God's best for them.
- 5) However, I Corinthians 7 was written for a reason; some are called to be single and celibate, and they ought never to be regarded as second-class overcomers if they never get married.
- 6) Be aware that the ex-gay movement has been criticized because at times overcomers have felt pressured to get married before they were ready.

4. What do you think will be the hardest parts of overcoming?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Many say the lust of the eyes.
- 2) Many also say the loneliness.
- 3) Some say ssa/ma/tx behaviors are how they deal with stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions.
- 4) A few say it is difficult to cut ties with the ssa/ma/tx community, especially if they have publicly supported gay rights or have no other supportive group.
- 5) Some fear that people at church will shun them.
- 6) Some wonder about what kind of man/woman they will become. They feel uncomfortable about changing their identity.
- 7) Some want to enjoy their fantasies.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Ssa/ma/tx people often give sex too much importance in their lives. So do many heterosexuals.

- 2) Ssa/ma/tx people often respond passively to temptation. They need to pick up their sword (Ephesians 6:17) and battle the negative thoughts.
- 3) Heterosexuals also struggle with the lust of the eyes. We all need to learn to let our eyes just bounce off attractive people when we feel tempted to lust.
- 4) I John 2:15-17 is a helpful passage to quote when one is tempted to visual lusts.
- 5) Remind them that the more victory they gain over the sins of the mind, the more power they are likely to have to overcome the sins of visual lusts.
- 6) A season of solitude is common to many overcomers. This time of solitude can be spent alone with Jesus as the Holy Spirit leads them through thorough self-examination (Psalm 139:23-24). More will be said about this in Unit III.
- 7) A church might not trust the overcomer's sincerity. Church members are also people with weaknesses, and not everyone is ready to be helpful. Church members might need to learn more about how to help. If the overcomer attends and participates consistently, the church will likely become more comfortable with him/her over time.
- 8) Often the people who have overcome other addictions, such as alcohol, are the best ones to reach out to overcomers.
- 9) Our identity should be based first upon who we are in Christ. As the Holy Spirit leads us to greater self-examination and makes changes in our lives, a new identity will emerge. Reassure the overcomer that he/she will like his/her new self (Jeremiah 29:11).
- 10) Reassure them that because they are confronting this sin, temptation will be tougher than ever. Whenever we try to overcome a sin, we find out how strong it is. Often we use our favorite sins to deal with painful emotions. Also, the devil will work hard to convince us to give up.
- 11) If the ssa/ma/tx community was their only source of love, friendship, approval, understanding, loyalty, and belonging, ask why all that was not available without sex.
- 12) Acknowledge the pain of rejection, and suggest that they ask God to point them to the right people with whom they might become friends.

- 13) In Key 3, overcomers will learn to use memorized Scripture to stop ungodly thoughts immediately. Encourage them to begin memorizing verses that are meaningful to them.
- 14) Encourage them to try to talk with people whom they consider attractive. Often talking to an attractive person makes him/her seem less mysterious and thereby less attractive.

5. What warnings and encouragements are found in James 4:4-6?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most people understand that we are not to compromise with sin.
- 2) Most people understand that we need to humble ourselves before God.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Friendship with the world means participating in its sins and believing its lies. The world lies about ssa/ma/tx overcomers by saying that they were born that way, cannot change, and should not try.
- 2) The world lies by saying, "If it feels good, do it." The world also severely punishes people who break the few taboos that remain. The world gives mixed signals to anyone who listens to its lies.
- 3) The world encourages unhappy people to use sex as a drug to feel better.
- 4) The world encourages people to live selfishly.
- 5) Humbling ourselves before God involves letting the Holy Spirit shine His light on our sins of thoughts, attitudes, sexual and other fantasies, secret agendas, hidden motivations, pride, and self-deception, confessing whatever He shows us, and relying on His mercy to save us (Psalm 139:23-24).
- 6) Victory over our sins of the mind brings us freedom and power. We feel better when we are no longer controlled by our thoughts.
- 7) Humbling ourselves before God by confessing sins of the mind brings us real self-esteem, which replaces phony self-esteem based on fantasy.

6. What do we need to do to get help from God (James 1:5)?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most people understand that we must ask.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) God makes getting help easy for us (Matthew 7:7).
- 2) We can ask the Holy Spirit to show us what thoughts and lies are behind our temptations to commit sins of deeds.
- 3) After we have confessed a sin, we can ask the Holy Spirit to show us the thoughts and lies (John 8:44) that led to the sin and the truth from the Word (John 8:32) that will make us stronger against future temptations.
- 4) God is delighted when we ask, and He will never scold us when we confess our weaknesses.
- 5) Whenever we feel negative emotions, we can ask the Holy Spirit to show us the lies behind them.

**7. What can short-circuit our prayers (James 1:1-8)?****Common responses:**

- 1) Most people understand that it is doubt.
- 2) Some express concern about their own double-mindedness and instability.
- 3) Some recognize that doubt causes impatience with the change process.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) The only way we can overcome doubt is to read the Word often.
- 2) Sometimes we doubt God's mercy towards penitent sinners.
- 3) When we doubt, we feel as though God has abandoned us.
- 4) The Holy Spirit uses the Word to show us ways in which we are double-minded.
- 5) Criticizing themselves for being double-minded will not help. Encourage them to focus instead on what the Holy Spirit is trying to show them.
- 6) Double-mindedness is often caused by legalism. Encourage them to look for evidence of God's mercy in every passage. More will be said about this in Key 3.

- 7) Nothing in ourselves can make our faith stronger. The Holy Spirit brings faith to us from outside of ourselves, through the Word.
- 8) He will graciously and patiently give us the reassurance that we need.

8. What should be our reasons for not doing ANY sin (Genesis 39:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:13-15)?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Sin goes against God.
- 2) We are saved by God's mercy in Christ, Who paid the ultimate penalty for our sins.
- 3) We live for God, not for ourselves.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Because we love God, we willingly surrender our self-will.
- 2) Once we begin to accept God's forgiveness for our sins, we cannot decide that we are going to repent of some sins but not others. We need to repent of whatever sins the Holy Spirit convicts us.
- 3) When we refuse to repent, we are asking for trouble.
- 4) Nobody is perfectible in this life. When one sin is overcome, the Holy Spirit will draw our attention to the next thing in our lives that He wants to fix.

9. What is our condition because of our faith in Christ (John 8:32-36)?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most people understand that we are free.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) The secular world defines freedom as doing whatever we desire. The Bible defines freedom as willing obedience to God without feeling restricted thereby (Romans 6:17 & 21).
- 2) We only experience true freedom when we repent of our sins and accept God's forgiveness in Christ.

- 3) We can surrender self-will to God's will only when we realize that we are saved by God's mercy in Christ as a free gift.
- 4) Many overcomers have had long-standing issues with rebellion, as do many other addicted people. What they thought was freedom was really a form of slavery (John 8:34).
- 5) Only the Holy Spirit can make us realize that our rebellion was slavery, not freedom (Romans 5:1).
- 6) Legalism is also a form of slavery (Galatians 2:16, 3:22-25, & 5:1).
- 7) The Law of God only aggravates our tendency to rebel (Romans 7:7-19).
- 8) Before the Fall in Genesis 3, our first parents desired to obey God's will. Only after the Fall did they desire to rebel. Jesus died to restore us to peace with God, as if the Fall had not occurred (Romans 5:1).

10. What are some things you have learned from this Key study?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many now realize that ssa/ma/tx temptations can be overcome, and they no longer believe change is impossible.
- 3) Some are just beginning to grasp that we are both saved and sanctified by God's mercy, that they can fight ssa/ma/tx temptations from their positions as pardoned sinners, and that they need not strive to please an angry God (John 3:17).
- 4) Some realize that they need to focus on God rather than on their sin.
- 5) Many express that overcoming temptation will be difficult.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Give encouragement and acknowledge the difficulties; nothing will be gained by pretending that overcoming will be easy.
- 2) Encourage them to keep their focus on Jesus and the Ransom paid for them on the cross.
- 3) Encourage them to go immediately to God with any obstacles. He is ready and willing to war on their behalf whenever He is asked.

- 4) Half the battle will be won when they realize that ssa/ma/tx temptations can be overcome, and when they no longer believe the lie that they were born that way. However, do not argue about this idea if they are not ready to accept it. Let the Word work on their hearts and minds.

11. On a scale of 1-10, how victorious have you been lately? Please explain your answer.

(Victory is measured by how much you have overcome temptation.)

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Some focus only on sins of deeds; others express concern over sins of the mind.
- 3) Many express concern over masturbation.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Encourage thanks to God for any victory gained.
- 2) Commend even small victories, because even small victories may have been difficult.
- 3) Assure them that God is pleased even when we take baby steps in obedience to His will.
- 4) If someone has fallen into sin, do not criticize them. Nothing will be gained if they cannot be honest with you. Encourage them to retrace their steps and to ask the Holy Spirit for insight into what weaknesses led to the fall.
- 5) If they sin less frequently than before, encourage thanks and praise because God is working in their lives. Emphasize progress rather than perfection.
- 6) If their numbers are low and they report very little victory, remind them that they are just getting started.
- 7) Encourage them to begin using what they have learned, especially about overcoming the sins of the mind. Encourage them to memorize Scripture verses that speak of the mercy of God as a free gift.
- 8) All sins, whether small or great, must be confessed to God (I John 1:7-9). Everyone who successfully overcomes ssa/ma/tx has learned to live transparently before God.

- 9) Avoid aggravating guilt over masturbation. Instead, encourage them to focus on gaining victory over the sins of the mind.

12. Is there anything special you would like to talk about?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

Plan of Action:

- 1) Affirm anything that is Biblical.
- 2) Be alert for any hidden legalism.
- 3) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

**Additional points:**

- 1) Sins not only include deeds and words, but also thoughts, attitudes, fantasies, secret agendas, hidden motivations, pride, and lies that we have believed.
- 2) Encourage them to surrender fantasies, including sexual fantasies involving either gender, fantasies of heroism or virtue beyond what one actually possesses, fantasies of aggrandizement, and fantasies of entitlement. Explain that sexual fantasies are pornographic movies in the brain that must be stopped in the first frame.
- 3) While fantasies about the opposite sex seem natural and harmless, many overcomers have found that at some point in their arousal those fantasies switch from focusing on the opposite sex to ssa/ma/tx fantasies.

- 4) While fantasies of heroism or virtue appear to be good, they can block us from developing real courage and real virtue. While we easily admire virtue in our minds, we find it much harder to practice in real life.
- 5) Often we love who we are in our fantasies but not our real selves. We are tempted to love others only when they behave like the people in our fantasies.
- 6) We become stronger as we confront life as it is, not as we fantasize it to be.
- 7) Many ssa/ma/tx overcomers have a hidden fear of what kind of a person they will become when they have overcome their temptations. Reassurance is found in Jeremiah 29:11, Ephesians 2:10, and I John 3:2a. No Christ-follower knows what kind of person God is turning him/her into.
- 8) Assure them that they will never be “just another straight person”. Ssa/ma/tx people often feel a need to be different. There are righteous ways to be different. Assure them that God will eventually have a job for them, a unique calling that only they can carry out, for which they are being prepared.
- 9) Sometimes maa men will attempt to justify sex with minor children by claiming that the children appeared to enjoy it. The truth is that children who experience some degree of pleasure from the abuse often feel shameful and degraded, and are at risk for suicide as the only way to end their self-disgust.
- 10) Ssa/ma/tx sins should be treated like an addiction. Any sin has the potential to become addictive (John 8:34).
- 11) Nothing will be gained by feeling guilty over erotic dreams or dwelling on them the next morning. Praying about them and getting on with the day are more productive.
- 12) Most ssa/ma/tx overcomers express concern about masturbation. It reinforces the fantasies. The fantasies are probably more of a concern than the solitary act itself; but if an overcomer feels it is necessary to give it up, support him/her without criticizing any slips.

## NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

It is helpful to recognize temptation early, so one can block it immediately. The battle is truly in the mind, and we need to be alert to our thoughts. Negative thoughts can lead us to temptation by putting us into bad moods; then the ssa/ma/tx temptations become the drug to make us feel better, at last temporarily. Here are some that seem common to anyone who is in the grip of an addictive sin.

**Envy:** We often grew up in circumstances where other children seemed to be more talented, more loved, better treated, “luckier”, more approved of, and happier. We did not know how to gain that favored status, and we became envious of the ones who did. We often envied children of the same sex who seemed to possess that indefinable something we call “masculinity” or “femininity”. We envied children who had more loving families and who were not being abused. We might also have envied children of the opposite sex, who seemed to receive more love and social privileges.

**Self-pity:** We often grew up in circumstances where there were abundant reasons to feel sorry for ourselves, as we compared our lives to those of other children and felt that ours were lacking. Even after our circumstances improved, we continued to compare ourselves with others and thereby maintained an attitude of self-pity.

**Resentment:** We often grew up in circumstances where we were verbally, physically, or sexually abused. Emotional and/or physical needs were not met. We might have been hurt by parents, parent substitutes, other authority figures, other family members, other children, molesters, partners, and others.

**Cynicism:** Cynics put the worst construction on the words, actions, and motivations of other people. Cynics are deeply mistrustful, and determined never to get hurt again. They put their feelers out, alert for injustices and possible offenses, and are therefore easily offended. He/she does not see the role he/she plays in accumulating more hurts. They put on mud-colored glasses and then become angry because the world looks like mud.

**Attitude of superiority to cover up deeper feelings of inferiority:** Men with alternative sexualities often feel superior to straight men, because they can often appreciate things that straight men do not. However, they sometimes desire to possess straight men's masculine qualities.

Lesbians often judge straight women as lacking self-reliance, and sleeping with men only to gain social advantages. Lesbians often view themselves as strong women, while viewing straight women as weak and overly reliant on men. Lesbians also feel superior to men and are proud of themselves for not needing them. Transsexual men often feel superior to women.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Every overcomer is unique, and has his/her own combination of negative thoughts. This list is provided only to help the overcomer begin identifying his/her own negative thoughts, as the Holy Spirit brings them to conscious awareness.

These are the kinds of thoughts that the Holy Spirit wants to take captive to the Lordship of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). He wants to re-wire our minds. These thoughts are all based on the lies of the devil (John 8:44), from which Jesus came to set us free (John 8:32 and 36).

## PIECES OF ARMOR

**Truth:** Temptation is fed and maintained by lies (John 8:44). Overcoming a particular temptation becomes easier if the lie is exposed to one's conscious mind and the truth from God's Word is spoken against it. Ssa/ma/tx temptations make promises that are not kept. The lifestyle is often based on fantasies that lead to disappointment. We need to become totally transparent with God about our sins and honest with ourselves and others.

**Righteousness:** This is the external righteousness of Jesus with which He covers the penitent sinner (Romans 3:22-24). When we start to read the word "righteous" as the alien righteousness imputed to us by God's mercy, rather than righteousness based on our own virtue, every passage in the Bible that speaks of "righteousness" takes on a whole new meaning. If we are protected by the external righteousness of Christ, we are protected from the false accusations of the enemy of our soul. Romans 8:1 becomes our reality.

**Peace:** Legalism destroys peace, and legalists are not peaceful people. When we repent of sin and accept God's forgiveness, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). God is for us, not against us. He never wars against penitent sinners; instead, He covers them with His mercy. We need not be angry with ourselves, because God is not angry with us. He pours out His goodness and mercy on us.

To bring about real peace between warring factions of people, both parties need to repent before God and then to ask each other's forgiveness.

**Faith:** Our faith cannot be in our own virtue. We can only put our faith in the mercy of God in Christ. Our faith is in the merits of Jesus. We have no righteousness of our own with which to influence or leverage Him on our behalf; we can only throw ourselves without reservation on His Grace. The incoming arrows are temptations, doubts, false accusations, fears that God has abandoned us, loss of hope, negative thoughts, etc.

Confidence in the covering of His Atonement on our behalf makes us able to withstand the flaming arrows.

**Salvation:** The Holy Spirit brings it to us because by ourselves we are not able to see the need of it, desire it, reach out for it, or believe in it. Nothing in us can bring us under conviction of sin; only the Holy Spirit has such power. We cannot initiate our salvation; any decision we make is totally in response to what the Spirit brings to us (John 15:16).

**Word:** Key 3 is about the use of Scripture to fight temptation. The Word is our one offensive weapon. Meanwhile, if a verse speaks to your heart, you can begin at once to memorize it.

It is important to remember that the armor is provided, we do not have it in us to put it on without the Holy Spirit, and God furnishes all of it.