

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM HANDBOOK**UNIT I****KEY 3 SCRIPTURE****Purpose of this Key:**

- 1) Recognize the mercy of God in every passage of Scripture.
- 2) Learn to use memorized Scripture against temptation.
- 3) Learn to use memorized Scripture to block ungodly thoughts.
- 4) Recognize that change can only come if we are persistent and consistent in our use of memorized Scripture.
- 5) Recognize that the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to build our faith.
- 6) Recognize that the Word of God shows us our sin through the Law of God, which we cannot keep.
- 7) Recognize that the Word of God shows us our Savior, Who made full satisfaction on the cross for all of our sins.
- 8) Realize that the most powerful verses for blocking temptations are not the ones that reveal God's Laws but the ones that assure us of His mercy.
- 9) May the overcomer find his/her "safety Scripture", the one that speaks to his/her heart and reliably helps block temptation.

Psalm 119:105**Common responses:**

- 1) The Word of God is a reliable guide for living.
- 2) It sheds light into dark situations and exposes the devil's lies.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) It certainly is a reliable guide for living.
- 2) However, it is far more than a list of rules.
- 3) It shows us God's Law, which cannot save us (Romans 3:20-21).
- 4) It shows us the Gospel, the mercy of God in the atonement of Jesus (Romans 3:22-24), which does save us.

- 5) The Law sets us up to be rebellious and feel guilty, so we sin even more to cover up or justify our previous sins (Romans 7:7-23).
- 6) The Law tempts us to see how much sinning we can get away with.
- 7) The Gospel calls us to drown our sin in repentance and receive God's mercy (Romans 7:24-8:3).
- 8) The Gospel assures us that Jesus did on our behalf what we could never do for ourselves (Romans 5:6-10).
- 9) It gives hope and reassurance when life is going badly (Romans 8:31-39).
- 10) It assures us that we can approach God with any problem or weakness.

Psalm 119:11

Common responses:

- 1) We need to be in the Word in order to defeat temptation.
- 2) The Word gives us reassurance, encouragement, hope, and God's promises.
- 3) The Word replaces the devil's lies with God's truth.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Memorizing Scripture and using it against temptation "re-wires" the mind.
- 2) When we have a habitual thought, the mind gets organized in support of it. When we use Scripture to stop negative thoughts, the mind gets organized around the memorized Scripture.
- 3) Learning new mental habits takes time, and we need to work consistently and persistently.
- 4) At the same time, the Holy Spirit is using the Word to build our faith.
- 5) We need to be alert for how we interpret what we read. When we look for the evidence of God's mercy in every passage, we see that even in His judgment He calls people to repentance so He can forgive them.
- 6) If all we see in the Bible is the Law, which we cannot keep, we will be tempted to put our faith in our own righteousness instead of God's forgiveness.
- 7) Even the first murderer received mercy. The mark of Cain was protection from vigilantes (Genesis 4:13-15).

- 8) The 10 Plagues on Egypt were 10 chances to repent (Exodus 7-12). Some people who were not Hebrews came to faith in God (Exodus 12:38).
- 9) Jericho had 40 years in which to repent (Joshua 2:9-11). Human sacrifice was part of their culture. No one came out to Joshua to ask what could be done to prevent God's wrath. Only the town prostitute appealed to God's mercy (Joshua 2:12). She became an ancestor of Jesus (Matthew 1:5).
- 10) God showed mercy even in His judgments of Ninevah and Manasseh.
- 11) When people see the Bible as a book of Laws, which they cannot keep, it becomes hard to read.
- 12) When they begin to see the mercy of God displayed in every passage, it becomes well-loved and hard to put down.
- 13) The mercy of God is what motivates us to defeat temptation (2 Corinthians 5:15 & Romans 6:1-2).

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Common responses:

- 1) The Word of God changes our lives.
- 2) It shows us the right way to live.
- 3) We eventually want to serve others.
- 4) It reveals the errors in our thinking.
- 5) The Bible is true and without error.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any true statement about the Bible's inerrancy, infallibility, and reliability.
- 2) It purges us of wrong thinking.
- 3) It calls us to repentance of sin and assures us of God's forgiveness.
- 4) Confront legalistic interpretations. The Scriptures reveal both the Law and the Gospel (John 1:16-17)
- 5) Even the Law was an act of mercy to newly emancipated slaves, who needed to develop an orderly society.

- 6) The 10 Commandments became the foundation of a civilization that has blessed millions of people (Exodus 20:1-17).
- 7) The Law prepared people for the coming of Jesus (John 1:17).
- 8) The Law identifies our sin (Romans 3:20-24 & Galatians 3:22-25) so we can repent.

Hebrews 4:12

Common responses:

- 1) The Word of God takes off our masks and exposes our secret sins.
- 2) It confronts lies.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) It exposes sins of thoughts, attitudes, fantasies, secret agendas, hidden motivations, pride, and self-deception (John 8:44-45).
- 2) The Holy Spirit uses it to shine His light onto our secrets.
- 3) The devil uses moments of fear, trauma, shame, humiliation, helplessness, pain, and attacks against our self-esteem, to put his lies into our minds. These lies continue to influence us long after our circumstances have changed.
- 4) When a lie of the devil is replaced by truth, we become more free (John 8:32 & 36).
- 5) The Word of God gets down to the roots of our sins, where real change can occur.
- 6) It also shows us how to live righteous and holy lives.
- 7) It confronts our self-will and shows us that God's will is better.

1. On a scale of 1-10, how much memorizing of Scripture have you done?

Common responses:

- 1) Most have memorized at least some.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) If they have memorized a lot, encourage them to keep on.
- 2) If they have memorized some, encourage them to keep on.

- 3) If they have not done much, encourage them to start.
- 4) If they say that they cannot memorize, assure them that it gets easier over time.
(They may have attended a school that did not require memorizing, but it is never too late to start.)
- 5) Many find it helpful to write out a verse and re-read it several times a day or to write the same verse over and over.
- 6) They may truly believe that they are not smart; those raised in verbally abusive environments may have been told they could not learn. Their low self-esteem needs to be handled with sensitivity, as do their painful memories. Give lots of reassurance and encourage any effort.

2. On a scale of 1-10, how much do you agree that you need to memorize?

Common responses:

- 1) Most Christians agree that they need to memorize for their own benefit.
- 2) A few realize that they might need to memorize in order to help others.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Encourage them to start or continue.
- 2) Encourage memorizing any verse that seems to jump out at them and feels meaningful. The Holy Spirit may have pointed them to a helpful verse.
- 3) Encourage them to memorize verses that bring the consolation of the Gospel. The Law leads either to despair or self-righteousness, while the Gospel changes our self-will (Romans 6:17 & 21).
- 4) Encourage them to re-read their verses before going into situations that might be tempting.

3. Have you ever used Scripture to fight temptation? Did it help? Would you share an example?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) This question will come up again at various times throughout the program, so if they have not done it yet, there will be other opportunities to share “war stories”.
- 2) Commend any use of Scripture to combat temptation.
- 3) The author can recall no instance in which anyone’s persistent use of Scripture was ineffective against temptation.
- 4) Sometimes it helps to time oneself during temptation; people often find that if they resist, it does not last as long as they had thought.
- 5) The Word of God re-wires their minds as the Holy Spirit uses it to strengthen their faith.
- 6) If sinful fantasies have become one’s way to cope with painful emotions, when one stops those thoughts with the Word of God, overcomers often feel like they are in withdrawal from a drug.
- 7) At this stage overcomers sometimes panic and decide the old life was better than the feeling of being in withdrawal.
- 8) Assure them that these feelings are normal will not last forever.
- 9) God cannot heal our painful emotions if we will not stop distracting ourselves from our pain by using sinful fantasies.
- 10) Point them to Hebrews 2:17-18 and assure them that Jesus had at least one ssa/ma/tx temptation in His lifetime. Some Christians have trouble accepting that, but the Bible says it, so it is true. He knows exactly how ssa/ma/tx overcomers feel.
- 11) Point them also to Hebrews 4:15-16. Jesus felt the temptation but did not sin. He is right in the middle of our struggles and never forsakes us.

4. What ssa/ma/tx temptations are strongest in your life?**Common responses:**

- 1) Many say visual temptations.
- 2) Many say the physical contact.
- 3) Some say making sexual jokes with others.
- 4) Some say the desire for companionship.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Recognize that sexuality carries a lot of emotional loading. Lust becomes the way to distract oneself from pain. Heterosexuals can also do this if their sexuality has not been redeemed by Christ.
- 2) Anyone's temptations can become distractions from pain, and any sin can be mood-altering and addictive (John 8:34 & Romans 6:16-22).
- 3) When we resist temptation consistently, we gain self-esteem, strength, and clearer thinking.
- 4) I John 2:15-17 is helpful to memorize.
- 5) Heterosexual Christians also have to learn to let their eyes bounce off attractive people and avoid taking the second look (Matthew 5:27-28).
- 6) We all need to face our painful emotions head-on without using sin to distract us.
- 7) The need for love, friendship, approval, understanding, loyalty, belonging, etc., are legitimate.
- 8) No one should have to trade sex for these needs to be met.
- 9) Church ought to be a place where there is support, fellowship, accountability, and people who will come around overcomers and pray with them, walk alongside them, and be their friends.
- 10) Sometimes the ssa/ma/tx overcomers are the ones who start accountability groups in churches, and later heterosexuals struggling with affairs or pornography ask to join.
- 11) Even in church different people are at different stages of their Christian walk, and some are not ready to be helpful.
- 12) Loneliness is the #1 reason that people return to the ssa/ma/tx lifestyle.
- 13) Sometimes a period of solitude is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to help us face painful memories, confront sins of the mind, identify lies with which we were deceived, and show us how to love ourselves the right way (Psalm 139:23-24).

5. Do you think ssa/ma/tx temptations are more powerful than other temptations? Why or why not?

Common responses:

- 1) Some say “yes”.
- 2) Many recognize that they are only more powerful for those who have those temptations.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) They are only more powerful for those who have those temptations.
- 2) Other people have other kinds of temptations.
- 3) When ssa/ma/tx temptations are overcome to a point where they become insignificant issues in ones’ life, the Holy Spirit will put His hand on other sins that need to be confessed.
- 4) No one is perfectible in this life, and we will need to continue to repent of our sins until we die.
- 5) If one wants to start a (friendly) argument in ex-ssa/ma/tx circles, ask which was harder to overcome: ssa/ma/tx or alcohol/drug addiction. Opinions will vary.

6. Why did God give us the Scriptures (John 8:32-36)?

Common responses:

- 1) Most people comprehend that the truth sets us free.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to shine His light into the dark corners of our minds, expose the lies of the devil that we have believed, and speak the truth against those lies (Romans 12:2 & 2 Corinthians 10:5).
- 2) Truth makes us transparent before God, because His mercy in Christ is sufficient to cover our sins (I John 1:7-10).
- 3) We use it to block temptations (Ephesians 6:17).
- 4) We are truly free when we feel joyful doing God’s will (Romans 6:17 & 21, & I John 5:3).

- 5) When we feel tempted, we can ask the Holy Spirit to show us the lies that are driving the temptation.
- 6) When we are in a bad mood, which sets us up for temptation, we can ask the Holy Spirit if there is a lie that is affecting our mood.
- 7) Both Old and New Testaments bear witness to Christ (John 5:39).
- 8) We use it to witness to and disciple others (2 Timothy 2:15).

7. Why is studying God's Word important?

Common responses:

- 1) It gives us wisdom.
- 2) It teaches us what God wants us to know.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) The secular world gives junk science, re-written history, and empty philosophies as excuses to continue sinning (Ephesians 2:2-3).
- 2) Without the Word of God, we have no choice but to accept the worldly theories (Colossians 2:8-10).
- 3) The worldly theories change with every generation and contradict themselves and each other.
- 4) God's Word does not change.
- 5) Secular theories are not always wrong, but the most helpful ones seem to be those most in line with Scripture.

8. Do you think God's Word promises freedom from ssa/ma/tx (I Corinthians 6:9-11)?

Common response:

- 1) Most people comprehend that the answer is 'yes'.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) This verse is the banner verse of the ex-ssa/ma/tx movement.
- 2) There were ex-ssa/ma/tx people in the early Christian church, and the Apostle Paul knew who they were.

- 3) Emphasize "...such WERE some of you..."
- 4) The ground is truly level at the foot of the cross. Ssa/ma/tx people are in the same category as greedy and gossipy people.
- 5) While society treats some sins as worse than others, the truth is that we all need redemption in Christ, no matter who we are or what we have done.
- 6) If honest, everyone can see oneself somewhere in that list of sins.
- 7) Some people try to argue that the Greek word commonly translated as "homosexual" really means "pedophile" or "transsexual", but even if their argument were true, it would only prove the limitless mercy of God.
- 8) This verse can be used to confront gay-bashing. Heterosexuals who get disgusted at ssa/ma/tx people need instead to get disgusted at their own sins.

9. How can we help each other? Before we try to help someone else, what do we need to do first (Colossians 3:16)?

Common responses:

- 1) Most people comprehend that we need to soak up the Word and let it work on our minds.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) We need to fellowship in churches with other believers so we can apply this verse to our lives.
- 2) We need to ask God how He wants us to apply this verse, and then look for opportunities to do so, even if others in our churches are not.
- 3) God has a job for every penitent sinner who comes to Him for forgiveness, and the more of the Word we take in, the more we can bless others.

10. What new things have you learned about the Scriptures?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm anything that is Biblical.

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.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Encourage thanks and praise 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 re-trace their steps and ask the Holy Spirit to give them insight into what weaknesses led to the fall.
- 5) Emphasize progress rather than perfection.
- 6) If their numbers are low and they report very little victory, remind them that they are just beginning.
- 7) Encourage them to use memorized Scripture to block tempting and negative thoughts. Assure them that this will improve with practice.
- 8) If they slipped into sin, encourage them to confess it, accept God's forgiveness, and get back on track (I John 1:7-9). Falling is not the problem; the problem is when one stays down after having fallen.
- 9) Encourage them to focus on the mercy of God in Christ rather than their sins. Beating up on themselves accomplishes nothing; Jesus took the beating on their behalf.
- 10) If their numbers are high, you might tell them that more tests are likely in the future, but such concerns should not prevent them from enjoying their present victories.

12. How is your spiritual life in general, how are your private devotions, and how are things at your church/fellowship group?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Encourage thanks and praise to God for whatever is going well.
- 2) Explore what is not going well and try to help them find out why.
- 3) Give encouragement and be patient as they sort out the many new ideas that they have received in such a short time.
- 4) New habits of thought and action take time to learn. They may already be progressing as fast as possible.
- 5) If necessary, teach them how to pray and read the Bible and encourage them to find a good church.

Plan of Action (Read the description of Plans of Action and make your plans as specific as possible).

- 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) For many ssa/ma/tx people, the Bible has only been used to condemn them. They may have gone to gay pride events where protestors told them their sins were worse than other people's.
- 2) Many ssa/ma/tx people find comfort in the fact that for the sake of only 10 righteous, God would have had mercy on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:22-32).

- 3) Jesus did not consider Sodom and Gomorrah beyond the reach of God's mercy (Matthew 10:14-15 & 11:23-24).
- 4) Abraham pleaded with God to spare them (Genesis 18:22-32). Heterosexual Christians can plead with God on behalf of ssa/ma/tx people.
- 5) Some ssa/ma/tx people have been told that only demonic influence could cause sins as bad as theirs. No Biblical text supports this teaching.
- 6) If they are able to say that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus is in their heart, that they are covered by the blood of Jesus, that He defeated sin, death, and the power of the devil on the cross, and was resurrected from the dead, assure them that they are not demon-possessed.
- 7) Often we fall into sin when we believe that God has abandoned us. Eve thought God had abandoned her (Genesis 3:1-7). King Saul thought that God had abandoned him (I Samuel 13:5-14).
- 8) When ssa/ma/tx overcomers begin to consistently and persistently block tempting thoughts with memorized Scripture, they often discover not only how powerful a grip these thoughts have but also how powerful the Word of God is when applied.
- 9) They might feel like they are in withdrawal from a drug. Give reassurance that this feeling is temporary, and encourage them to keep focusing on Jesus.
- 10) The author is in the process of studying how brain chemistry and neurons change as people change the focus of their thoughts. Hopefully more knowledge can be added at a later time.