

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

UNIT I KEY 4 FORGIVENESS

SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE: Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Colossians 3:13

Ssa/ma/tx people often come from backgrounds where they were deeply hurt. They may have been hurt by parents, parent substitutes, other family members, other authority figures, peers, molesters, and partners; and the list could go on. An essential part of recovery is coming to the point of forgiving the ones who have wronged us. So how do we get there?

First of all, we must understand what forgiveness is **not**. It is not ignoring the wrong the offenders did and saying, “That is okay”. Forgiveness is not denying that what they did was wrong, minimizing the damage inflicted upon us, or making or accepting excuses for what they did. It is not justifying what they did by blaming the offenders’ own painful childhoods, as if shifting responsibility back a generation could help us feel better.

The first step of forgiveness is to acknowledge that what the offenders did was wrong: no ifs, ands, or buts. We cannot receive forgiveness from God with anything less than complete honesty, and real forgiveness given to others must be based upon honesty as well. Whether or not the ones who wronged us are honest lies between them and God; the one giving forgiveness must fully acknowledge the wrong that was done and the damage that was caused.

To truly forgive someone, we must face our desire for compensation. When someone wrongs us, we feel hurt, helpless, and humiliated. We immediately and instinctively seek compensation for the hurt, helplessness, and humiliation that was thrust upon us. We believe at a deep emotional level that the other person has taken something away from us,

and we want it restored. Revenge, driven by anger, is the means by which we seek compensation.

Anger feels powerful. No one likes to feel hurt, helpless, and humiliated. Anger restores the sense of power that is missing. We seek actual revenge, or console ourselves by fantasizing about it. And at first, it feels good.

However, when we indulge in real or fantasized revenge, we avoid our core feelings of hurt, helplessness, and humiliation. We do not face and overcome the pain. Instead, we build up more and more anger. As long as the core feelings are still there, no amount of anger will ever be enough to compensate us. We feel as if we cannot hate that person enough. Anger becomes an addiction, resentment grows, and it can become a monster of hatred.

We need to surrender our demand for compensation. We have already been compensated. Jesus on the cross became our compensation. He was hurt, helpless, and humiliated, not only on our behalf but also on behalf of the ones who wronged us. He paid for our sins with His hurt, helplessness, and humiliation, which we the caused. He accepted the pain of His own free will on behalf of fallen humanity, who did not know what we really needed. We can therefore face our core feelings of hurt, helplessness, and humiliation, without flipping into anger to gain a phony sense of power. We can take our pain to Jesus in prayer and grieve our losses in His presence. He has already born our griefs and sorrows.

Consider the ones who sinned against you, and consider Jesus on the cross. Did He suffer enough to compensate you for the wrong done against you? A split second of His time on the cross is already far more than we deserve.

Because of the compensation given by Jesus for sin, the ones who wronged us no longer owe us. We can surrender all “rights” to real or fantasized revenge. Even the urge to make them face their sins can be revenge in pious disguise. When we forgive their sin,

their sin no longer lies between them and us; it now lies only between them and God. Whether or not they repent and accept the mercy offered to them from the cross, is a question you can leave between them and God. Your debt to God was paid, and their debt to you was paid.

SCRIPTURES: Write out what each of these verses or passage mean to your life and situation.

Matthew 6:12

Isaiah 53

Matthew 18:21-35

Luke 15

STUDY GUIDE

1. On a scale of 1-10, how forgiving do you think you are (1 is the lowest, 10 is the highest)?
2. What are some of the hurts in your life that you have not yet forgiven? Use the back of the paper if necessary.

10. On a scale of 1-10, how much memory work have you done?

11. Did you use any memorized Scripture to battle temptation lately? What was the result?

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

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