

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM HANDBOOK**UNIT I Key 5****LOVE****Purpose of this Key:**

- 1) Learn the Biblical definition of love.
- 2) Recognize that love originates with God.
- 3) Recognize that we could not love God unless He loved us first.
- 4) Recognize that God's love is unconditional.
- 5) Recognize that only Jesus could love perfectly.
- 6) Recognize that we learn to love by receiving Jesus' love.
- 7) Recognize that Jesus makes it possible to love difficult people.
- 8) Recognize that difficult people stretch our ability to love.
- 9) Recognize that love is an action verb, not an emotion.
- 10) Recognize that any lack of love must be confessed as sin.

I John 4:19**Common responses:**

- 1) Only through Jesus' love can we become able to love God.
- 2) We did not love God first; He loved us first.
- 3) He loved us so much that He sent Jesus.
- 4) God loves me; He called me into existence.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Most people comprehend that God starts the process.
- 2) Those who have a more legalistic attitude think they must love God first.
- 3) Be alert for any hidden legalistic ideas that God will only love them on condition they overcome ssa/ma/tx.
- 4) God's love is the only unconditional love in the universe (Romans 5:6-8).
- 5) We can only love difficult people as we let God pour love into our hearts (Matthew 5:43-48).
- 6) We could not love God first; in our rebellion, we pushed His love away.

- 7) Answering His call to repentance is the first step to receiving His love (I John 4:10, 14, & 16).
- 8) We need to repent of our lack of love.
- 9) If we let Him, the Holy Spirit can make us more loving.
- 10) When we have trouble giving love, we can read the Word of God and soak up the love of Jesus as expressed in the Scriptures.

I John 4:20

Common responses:

- 1) Most people comprehend that no matter how difficult, we must love others.
- 2) Real love for God leads to obedience, which means serving others.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Love is an action verb, not an emotion (Matthew 20:28)
- 2) If we love God, we will behave kindly, gently, and patiently towards others, even if we have no feelings towards them (Matthew 25:31-46).
- 3) God wants to take unloving people and turn them into monuments to His love.
- 4) When we forgive someone, we become willing to love them.
- 5) We are giving forgiveness and love when we pray for the salvation of the ones who wronged us
- 6) Mean people are a test of our faith and obedience.
- 7) No one will ever love perfectly in this life; only Jesus could do that.
- 8) Our sinful nature is only willing to love conditionally (Matthew 5:46-48).
- 9) When we are kind, gentle, and patient with a difficult person, motivated only by obedience to God, we can celebrate with Jesus (Matthew 25:40).
- 10) Sometimes we need to confess hatred as sin and ask God to replace it with love.

I John 4

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary. Different verses are significant to different people.
- 2) Verse 4 speaks to many.

- 3) Some grew up in situations where all they learned was hatred.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Love is God's very essence. We need never ask how He benefits. Love is what He is.
- 2) Never criticize anyone who confesses feelings of hatred. Encourage them to confess their sins and receive God's forgiveness. Hatred needs to be drowned in frequent repentance.
- 3) God living in us teaches us to love others.
- 4) We love God back by loving others.
- 5) Confessing Jesus as our Savior is where we begin learning to love (I John 4:13 & 15).
- 6) We all have a lot to learn about love.
- 7) Some people, depending upon their backgrounds, are alert to evil spirits.
- 8) First we get into a right relationship with God, then a right relationship with ourselves, and then a right relationship with others.
- 9) Commend whatever they have learned.
- 10) Encourage them to re-read this chapter, meditate on it, and memorize the parts that stand out for them.

I John 5**Common responses:**

- 1) Again, answers will vary. Different verses are significant to different people.
- 2) Verse 4 speaks to many.
- 3) Some have questions about verses 16-17.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) If you really love God, you will be glad to obey.
- 2) Commend whatever they have learned.
- 3) The Holy Spirit testifies to us that we can have assurance of salvation.
- 4) Our prayers need to reflect His will, and we need to accept His will as best.

- 5) Because people are both material and spiritual, God brings His mercy to us through visible elements of Baptism and Holy Communion.
- 6) Encourage them to re-read this chapter, meditate on it, and memorize the parts that stand out for them.
- 7) Verses 16-17 are explained by Matthew 12:31-32 and Hebrews 6:4-6.
- 8) Explain that John was writing to people who lived in a pagan culture and who had only recently come to faith in Christ. Godly love had to be explained to them very carefully, because this was a totally new teaching.

1. On a scale of 1-10, indicate what you believe to be the strength of your love.

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary. The strength of their love often depends upon how well they have forgiven those who wronged them.
- 2) It also depends upon how much they realize that God loves them.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) We all need to grow in love.
- 2) We will not love perfectly until we come before our Lord in Heaven (I John 3:2 & I Corinthians 13:12).
- 3) If the number is low because they are new Christians or have hardened their hearts for many years, give them reassurance that we all were new Christians once and had to break bad habits.
- 4) Never criticize a low number; give encouragement like Barnabas gave Saul (Acts 9:27).
- 5) If they acknowledge that love is difficult for them, commend them for recognizing their problem, and give them encouragement.
- 6) Practicing love frequently in small ways is better than waiting for an opportunity to perform a heroic act.

2. What do you learn about love from I Corinthians 13, commonly called “the love chapter”?

Common responses:

- 1) Different attributes of love are significant for different people.
- 2) If we do anything for reasons other than love, they are the wrong reasons.
- 3) Giving love is better than speaking in tongues.
- 4) To learn to love, we must allow the Holy Spirit to teach us.
- 5) Some became frustrated, because although they tried to love, the relationship was based on sin.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) This chapter describes Jesus' love, not ours.
- 2) There is no limit to how much we can love others.
- 3) This chapter is a good mirror with which to examine ourselves so we can confess our sins (Galatians 5:22-23).
- 4) We need to examine our motives (Jeremiah 17:9-10).
- 5) Often earthly love is based on selfish motives, to make someone love us back.
- 6) Earthly love feels cheated when we are not loved back as much we had hoped for.
- 7) Godly love does not demand to be loved back.
- 8) We can never stop learning from this chapter.
- 9) When confronted by a difficult person, we can say a quick prayer and ask, "How do you want me to respond to this person?"
- 10) Godly love refuses to participate in sinful acts with someone.

3. Did you learn anything new about love?**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Some see the love of Jesus.
- 3) Many feel convicted of how they fall short.
- 4) Some note that learning to love is difficult.
- 5) Some realize for the first time how necessary love is in the Christian walk.
- 6) Some realize that they have confused sex and love for a long time.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) This chapter shows both what we are doing right and how we fall short.
- 2) Never criticize them if they express difficulty. For some, godly love is a new idea.
- 3) Give encouragement. We all had to start somewhere.
- 4) This chapter is a good aid to confessing our sins.

4. What does this tell you about your love?**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary. Most see where they fall short and need to grow.
- 2) Those who have been walking with the Lord for a long time recognize that they have improved at love since they were first saved.
- 3) Some new Christians are learning for the first time that love is about giving rather than receiving.
- 4) Some are learning for the first time that love puts others first and is not just a word to use to get what they want from others.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Commend whatever they learned from this chapter.
- 2) We all need to repent of unloving behavior, speech, and thoughts.
- 3) Repentance can be followed by replacement prayers, in which one asks to become more kind, gentle, patient, etc.
- 4) Point them to verse 12, which tells us that even our efforts to be honest with God and ourselves are clouded by our sinful nature.

5. In what areas are you the weakest?**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary widely. This question seems to cause self-examination and confession.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) You may need to counsel based upon your experience and discernment.

- 2) Sometimes reviewing the material on forgiveness is appropriate.
- 3) Our failures to love are based upon lies of the devil.
- 4) We can ask the Holy Spirit to help us discern the lies behind our love failures.
- 5) For the first time, some are learning about godly love and coming under conviction of their love failures.
- 6) Those who were raised in homes with no knowledge of God may have confused love and sex all their lives.
- 7) Never criticize any difficulty they confess. Give assurance of God's forgiveness for our failures to love. Be sensitive to the fact this may be totally new for them.
- 8) Remind them that difficult people are put in our lives to stretch our ability to love.

6. What do you learn about love from I John 3 & 4?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary. Different verses are significant to different people.
- 2) Most people comprehend that being a child of God means we love God and others.
- 3) Some recognize the connection between love and obedience.
- 4) New Christians might realize for the first time that love is self-sacrifice.
- 5) Some recognize that society's messages about sexuality come from modern false prophets.
- 6) These chapters may cause self-examination and confession.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) John had to explain godly love very carefully, because it was a new teaching for the Greek-Roman culture into which he was bringing the Gospel.
- 2) Commend whatever they got out of it.
- 3) Encourage them to re-read these chapters, meditate on them, and memorize the parts that stand out for them.
- 4) Give assurance of God's forgiveness for our failures to love.

7. What is the key to loving God (I John 4:19)?

Common responses:

- 1) Most people comprehend that He loved us first, so we can love Him back.
- 2) Some realize that God makes it possible to love others rightly.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) We receive His love when we read the Bible and look for evidence of His mercy.
- 2) We receive His love when we confess our sins and accept His forgiveness by faith.
- 3) We receive His love when we remain transparent before Him and continue to receive His forgiveness that covers our sins.
- 4) God's love is total and calls us to total surrender.
- 5) God's love transforms us and makes us more like Christ (Romans 8:29).
- 6) Be alert to legalism; legalists tend to focus on the requirement to love God and others and miss the point that God begins the process.
- 7) This verse teaches us how helpless we were in our sin (Ephesians 2:1 & Titus 3:3), and how incapable we were of loving God. Only He can begin the process of redemption (Ephesians 2:4-5 & Titus 3:4-5).

8. What is the key to loving people (Matthew 22:39)?**Common responses:**

- 1) Some people comprehend that we must love ourselves before we can love others.
- 2) Be alert to legalism; legalists tend to focus on their requirement to love their neighbor and miss the point that they need to love themselves first.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Make sure that people understand the order here. First, we receive the love of Christ toward us. Having the love of Jesus helps us love ourselves and others.
- 2) A negative view of ourselves leads to a negative view of other selves.
- 3) If you have trouble loving others, focus on Jesus' love towards you.
- 4) We need to base our esteem for ourselves on God's esteem for us. He went through a lot of trouble for us (Luke 22:47 – 23:46, Romans 6:4-11).

- 5) When we examine ourselves, confess our sins, and accept God's forgiveness, we are receiving His love.
- 6) We then find that we like the person He is turning us into.
- 7) Ideally, we should love ourselves unconditionally as Jesus loves us unconditionally, so we can love our neighbor unconditionally.
- 8) We all have a lot of room for growth.

9. What is the acid test of our love (John 14:15)?

Common responses:

- 1) Most people comprehend that the test of our love is obedience.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Be alert to hidden legalism. We love God by obeying His call to repentance and accepting His forgiveness.
- 2) This verse does not mean that we first "clean up our lives" so we can prove that we are worthy of a reward.
- 3) As a free gift, He declares penitent sinners to be worthy; out of gratitude for the free gift, we surrender our will to His will.
- 4) Surrendering our will to His will involves loving others even if they are difficult.
- 5) Praying for their salvation is an act of obedience that often changes our feelings about them.
- 6) When we repent of our sins and receive God's forgiveness, we can feel joyful when we obey His requirements (I John 5:3).

10. Why is it necessary to have a good self-image (Matthew 22:39)?

Common responses:

- 1) Most people seem to comprehend that by having a good self-image, we can have a good image of others.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) If we loved ourselves as much as God loves us, we would love others much better.
- 2) If we have a negative image of ourselves and others, we have a greater capacity to be cruel to them.
- 3) Our sinful nature often projects our worst traits onto others. We attack the “badness” in others because we sense “badness” in ourselves.

11. How does God show in this passage that He is not unreasonable?

Common responses:

- 1) Many people seem to miss the point that we are not required to love our neighbor more than we love ourselves.
- 2) Some grasp the point that God has begun the whole process of love.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) It is necessary to explain that we do not have to love our neighbor more than we love ourselves.
- 2) The more of God’s love we take in, the more we are able to love ourselves and our neighbors.

12. 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 lately.)

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Some are tempted during unstructured time.
- 3) Some still give legalistic responses.
- 4) Some are concerned about erotic dreams.

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. After they have confessed it and accepted God's forgiveness (I John 1:7-9), encourage them to re-trace their steps and ask the Holy Spirit to give them insight into what weaknesses led to the fall.
- 5) Falling is not the problem; it is staying down when one has fallen. Slips into sin are usually not random; often something sets us up to fall.
- 6) If their numbers are low, and they report very little victory, remind them that they are just beginning.
- 7) Continue to encourage them to use memorized Scripture to block tempting and negative thoughts. Assure them that this will improve with practice.
- 8) If they sin less frequently than before, assure them that is a sign of God at work in their lives. Emphasize progress, not perfection.
- 9) If they view themselves as making very little progress, keep their focus on God's mercy rather than their own failures. Beating themselves up accomplishes nothing; Jesus took the beating on their behalf.
- 10) If their conscience bothers them over a sin that did not used to bother them, assure them that is a sign that God is at work in their lives.
- 11) Sin includes not only actions and words, but ungodly thoughts. Encourage confession of sins of thought (Romans 12:2), which makes it easier to avoid sins of words and deeds.
- 12) If temptation is causing them to lean harder on God, that is a victory in and of itself.
- 13) 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.

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

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary. The number here often correlates with the number in #12.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) If the number corresponds to the number in #12, point out the correlation.
- 2) Encourage any memorization, especially verses that speak of God's mercy and promises.
- 3) Verses that only condemn sin are not helpful; the most powerful verses give the consolation of the Gospel to the penitent sinner.
- 4) If they are having trouble memorizing, they could write down meaningful verses on a paper and read them several times throughout the day. Some find making flashcards helpful.
- 5) They may be discovering to their surprise that they are able to memorize and are more intelligent than they realized.
- 6) People from backgrounds where education was de-valued often find that as they grow in Christ, their interest in education increases. Encourage them to explore their potential. They may be surprised at what they are capable of.

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

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary. This will often reflect the answers in #12 and #13.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Encourage using Scripture to battle all temptations, sexual or otherwise. The more they use memorized Scripture to block negative thoughts and attitudes, the more easily they can block other temptations.
- 2) Commend any use of Scripture to battle temptation and encourage them to continue.
- 3) They may have had no significant temptation lately. While they should thank God for that, more temptation will come sooner or later. They need to memorize in order to be prepared.

- 4) If they are not using Scripture to battle temptation, encourage them to confess their sin and start using their sword (Ephesians 6:17).

15. 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 they have received in such a short time.
- 4) They may need to be taught about prayer, how to read the Bible, and be encouraged to find a good church.
- 5) New habits of thought and action take time to learn. They may already be progressing as fast as possible.

16. Is there anyone you are having trouble forgiving? What seems to be making that difficult?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Commend any progress, however small.
- 2) Go over the main points of Key 4 and see if they are integrating these into their thinking.
- 3) Remind them that forgiveness is often a process rather than an event, and that it will take time as the Holy Spirit works on their minds.
- 4) Forgiveness will be discussed in greater depth in the next units.

- 5) You may have to remind them that forgiveness is not the same as building trust. It is not the same as reconciliation.
- 6) If they have trouble forgiving themselves, remind them of Romans 8:1. If they have asked God's forgiveness and believe by faith that He has given it, they should no longer condemn themselves.
- 7) Regrets over sins of the past are normal. However, cleaning up the messes and finding God's plan for one's future is more helpful than focusing on past sins.

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.
- 4) Give lots of encouragement. It is hard to change a lot of habits in a short period of time.

Additional points:

- 1) Love does not fantasize about other people. Fantasies are inherently selfish.
- 2) They tempt us to manipulate, seduce, or force others into acting like characters in our private videos.
- 3) They tempt us to be angry, critical, or judgmental when others do not behave as we want.
- 4) Fantasies, especially sexual ones, can become idolatrous. They involve self-worship and self-glorification.
- 5) Sexual fantasies, heroic fantasies, or fantasies of entitlement, can block us from developing real love and real virtue. Fantasizing about a virtue is easier than developing real virtue.
- 6) Religious fantasies can prevent us from hearing the leading of the Holy Spirit. Fantasies of ministry can prevent us from working in real ministry.

- 7) The mind naturally seeks stimulation when we feel bored. We can then ask God how He wants us to spend our unstructured time.
- 8) Fantasizing is not the same as planning. Planning is reality-based and productive. When we plan, we consider what might go wrong. When we fantasize, we imagine ourselves to be omnipotent.