

# JOURNEY TO FREEDOM HANDBOOK

## UNIT I

## REVIEW

### **Purpose of this Review:**

- 1) Assess progress and celebrate victories.
- 2) Recognize God's handiwork in their lives.
- 3) Recognize that sexuality is not the only issue that is changing.
- 4) Target problem areas.

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

### **Common responses:**

- 1) Motivation is usually very high at this point.

### **Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Praise God for on-going high motivation (Philippians 1:6).
- 2) Assure them that some fluctuation is normal.
- 3) Encourage them to handle fluctuation by staying in the Word and in prayer, and focusing on the mercy of God in Christ.
- 4) Never criticize them for fluctuations in their desire to overcome. Part of their problem is that they have often felt like failures. Keep their focus on Christ and what He did on their behalf, not their "wind and waves".
- 5) The mercy of God, rather than the Law, is what motivates lasting change (2 Corinthians 5:9, 14-15).
- 6) Encourage them to use memorized Scripture when a sinful thought intrudes.

2. On a scale of 1-10, how much has your desire increased since you began the program?

### **Common responses:**

- 1) This number is usually high and represents an increase.
- 2) Some indicate that it was always high and could not get any higher.

**Points to emphasize:**

Same as in #1.

**3. Which statement best describes where you are at? Check one.****Common responses:**

- 1) Usually they identify either of the first two.
- 2) Sometimes they identify the last one.
- 3) Anyone who is not sure he/she wants to overcome has usually dropped out of the program by now.
- 4) Explanations for their answers often reflect how much temptation they have experienced lately.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Before responding, it helps to look at their answer in #4, as this often provides further explanation for their desire to overcome.
- 2) Commend, affirm, and give reassurance.
- 3) Do not criticize a slip into sin. Encourage them to confess it and accept God's forgiveness.
- 4) If they have had a lot of temptation lately, but not given in, commend them for resisting temptation even though it was hard.
- 5) Sometimes temptation catches us off guard (Psalm 19:12-13). Encourage confession, but also give reassurance that this can happen to anyone.
- 6) If their choices invited temptation, point out that they set themselves up to be weak.
- 7) However, if they still did not give in to temptation, even after they placed themselves in potentially compromising situations, give them affirmation.
- 8) Even when our choices invite temptation, we can still pray to be rescued.
- 9) At the point of giving in to sin, we can still pray, "Stop me, Lord!" Jesus is always glad to put out His hand to take hold of us (Matthew 14:30).

- 10) If they are fluctuating, encourage them to keep reading the Word, praying often, and remaining transparent before God about their thoughts and feelings (Psalm 103:10-14).

4. Which of the following best explains your increased desire to overcome? Check all that apply.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Once they believe overcoming is possible, many become strongly motivated.
- 3) Many check all or almost all of the reasons, often because they have gained greater insight.
- 4) Many indicate greater self-esteem when they resist temptation.
- 5) Explanations to their answers may indicate a closer walk with God.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any good insights. This question often triggers a lot of deep thinking.
- 2) Be aware that their reasons may change as they progress through the program.
- 3) A closer walk with God motivates deep and lasting change (John 10:10).
- 4) Be alert for hidden legalism. Only the mercy of God makes us willing to overcome temptation.
- 5) The responses that they do not check might never have been issues in their lives.

5. What are some issues that are holding back your progress? Check all that apply.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many indicate that they are determined to overcome.
- 3) Some check other issues that are holding back their progress, but in spite of those, they are still determined to overcome.
- 4) Some indicate that there are things they like about ssa/ma/tx.
- 5) Some are having trouble dealing with loneliness.
- 6) Some do not want to face their painful pasts.

- 7) Some have caused problems that are hard to fix.
- 8) Some have a slavish fear of God because of their sins.
- 9) A few still wonder if they were born that way.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Commend determination to overcome, even if other issues are still present.
- 2) Affirm that it is normal for them to still like some things about ssa/ma/tx at times. Every sin offers at least temporary pleasure.
- 3) Ssa/ma/tx activities were often a distraction from uncomfortable emotions.
- 4) Loneliness is the #1 reason people go back to the ssa/ma/tx life. Churches should be an abundant source of love, friendship, approval, understanding, loyalty, fellowship, and belonging.
- 5) Overcomers can ask the Holy Spirit to point them to the right people with which to become friends. Churches should be a place to find friends without having to provide sex.
- 6) Facing the pain from the past needs to be done at their own pace and under the direction of the Holy Spirit.
- 7) Fixing problems they have caused also needs to be done under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Since God wants us to make amends, we can ask Him how, with whom, when, and in what order.
- 8) Slavish fear of God indicates hidden legalism. These messages must be countered with a strong message of the mercy of God (I Timothy 1:12-17).
- 9) Fear of God's anger makes surrender difficult. Focus on His mercy (John 3:17). Surrender leads to the abundant life (John 10:10).

6. On a scale of 1-10, how much has your faith grown since you started the program?

Please explain your answer.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most indicate their faith has grown, often because they see themselves progressing.
- 2) Some say that Bible-reading and prayer has made their faith stronger.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Encourage thanks and praise to God for keeping His promises to them!
- 2) Be aware that growth of faith is a greater priority than overcoming ssa/ma/tx.
- 3) Make sure they understand that their faith is to be in the mercy of God, which saves us as well as sanctifies us. We can place no faith in our own strength.

7. On a scale of 1-10, how much have you used Scripture to battle temptation? What was the result?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Most are memorizing Scripture, using it to block tempting thoughts, and realizing that the Word gives them power to resist (John 8:34).

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any use of memorized Scripture to battle temptation.
- 2) If they are slow to memorize, often a legalistic view of Scripture is holding them back. Encourage them to memorize verses that speak of God's mercy and promises.
- 3) If memorizing is difficult for them, they can write down meaningful verses and read them several times a day.
- 4) As a result, their faith will grow (Romans 10:17).
- 5) If they are consistent, their minds will have less room for ssa/ma/tx thoughts.
- 6) We have more self-esteem when we resist temptation.

8. On a scale of 1-10, what kind of progress have you made in forgiving others who wronged you? Please explain your answer.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many say that forgiveness is still a struggle.
- 3) Many have made some progress but have not yet forgiven completely.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any progress.
- 2) Review the material on forgiveness. Encourage them to use what they have learned so far.
- 3) More will be said on forgiveness in the next Units. Unit I is to help them get started.
- 4) Be sure their expectations of themselves are realistic. Forgiveness is not forgetting. They may still have to deal with the pain.
- 5) Many of them were subjected to extreme physical, sexual, and emotional abuse at very young ages, so acknowledge that forgiveness may be a long process rather than an event.
- 6) If they have surrendered fantasies of revenge and are praying for the salvation of the ones who wronged them, God is delighted with them.
- 7) God is delighted with their willingness to let the Holy Spirit lead them through their issues with forgiveness, even if they are struggling.

9. On a scale of 1-10, how much has your ability to love grown since you started the program? Please explain your answer.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Most report an increase in their ability to love.
- 3) Some are focusing on their internal changes, seeking solitude, and therefore may not be reaching out to others.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any progress. Never criticize any difficulties they are having.
- 2) We can love someone without liking them. Love means we obey I Corinthians 13, regardless of how we feel about that person.
- 3) God is delighted when we ask Him to show us how to be more loving.

- 4) Some of them come from backgrounds in which they could not have learned to love. Everything about love is new information.
- 5) Remind them that God loves us, we love Him back, we learn to love ourselves, and then we can love others.
- 6) If they are spending time alone with God and letting Him change them, they will become more loving.

10. On a scale of 1-10, how much have you surrendered to the Lord since you started the program? Please explain your answer.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most have surrendered at least somewhat.
- 2) Most acknowledge that they have much more to surrender.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any surrendering they have done.
- 2) Surrender is easier than pushing forward with one's own agenda (Ephesians 3:20).
- 3) No one arrives at total surrender in this life (I John 3:2). We all have more to do.
- 4) No one can get ahead of the Holy Spirit. We can only surrender when He shows us what to surrender next.
- 5) We can only surrender when we trust God, and the Word is what the Holy Spirit uses to build our faith.

11. Are there any other changes you have made in your life since you started the program? Please share, and use additional paper if necessary.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many are noticing that other issues are changing in their lives as well.
- 3) Many like themselves better as they make these changes.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any response that is Biblically sound.

- 2) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.
- 3) Our forgiveness, love, and surrender will only be perfected in heaven.
- 4) Do not expect adult opposite sex attractions at this point.

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

**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. 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 consciences bother them over a sin that did not used to bother them, assure them that is a sign of God at work in their lives.
- 11) Sin includes not only actions and words, but also 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.
- 14) Assure them that God allows tests only when we are ready for them.

13. How victorious have you been since you started the program? Check the ones that apply.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most still look where they should not, but do not act on their temptations.
- 2) Most also think about ssa/ma/tx activities, but do not act on them.
- 3) Some have had slips into sin.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Same as #12.
- 2) Give encouragement. Overcoming these issues is probably the hardest change any of them have ever undertaken.

Plan of Action: (Let this plan put into action those Keys that gave you the most trouble.)

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Be alert for any hidden legalism.
- 3) Give lots of encouragement.

**Additional points:**

- 1) If an ssa/ma/tx overcomer begins to experience adult opposite sex attractions, they are often tempted to indulge those feelings and fantasies just because it feels good to have natural sexual feelings.
- 2) If opposite sex attractions are new to them, their reactions may be something like those of teenagers who are just beginning to discover those feelings. He/she will need to be aware of boundaries.
- 3) They may need some counsel on the difference between a normal sex drive and lust. Matthew 5:28 still applies.
- 4) At this point, a trick of the devil is to tempt them with a normal sexual thought, and when they are sexually aroused, to switch to an ssa/ma/tx thought. Overcomers need to be aware that this might happen.
- 5) Be aware that the opposite of ssa/ma/tx is not heterosexuality: it is holiness. Some notice their sexuality eventually turning toward the opposite sex. Others become content to be single and celibate. (I Corinthians 7:7).
- 6) Psalm 68:5 is helpful for those who had no father or the wrong kind of father. God is the right kind of Father.
- 7) Long periods of relative calm can be interrupted by onslaughts of temptation that can last for days.
- 8) At this point, overcomers may be like the Hebrews in the Sinai desert. The fleshpots of Egypt have been left behind, but they do not yet have their farm in the Promised Land. In the desert, there were water shortages, food rationing, heat, and hostile tribes; but there God met them and worked His changes in them.
- 9) The overcomer may be making significant changes, but has not yet had time to become accustomed to his/her new self. Their changes are new and on-going.
- 10) Their identities may be fluctuating. Encourage them to lean hard on God and remain transparent before Him.