

**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM HANDBOOK****UNIT II Key 4****FORGIVENESS****Purpose of this Key:**

- 1) Assess progress in forgiveness work.
- 2) Recognize their need to assess the damage caused by others' sins against them.
- 3) Learn to surrender the phony sense of power that hatred gives them.
- 4) Learn to face painful memories in the presence of Jesus.
- 5) Recognize the need to give up fantasies and desires for revenge.
- 6) Recognize that grieving is a necessary part of forgiveness.
- 7) Recognize that Jesus felt our pain on the cross.
- 8) Recognize the necessity of praying for the ones who wronged us.

Luke 23:34**Common responses:**

- 1) Most recognize that they need to forgive others just like Jesus forgave us from the cross.
- 2) Some recognize that the ones who wronged them may not have known what they were doing.
- 3) Some recognize that they themselves did not always know what they were doing.
- 4) Some recognize the need to pray for the salvation of the ones who wronged them.
- 5) Some recognize that sin is deceitful.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) When we were dead in our sins, we did not know what we were doing (Ephesians 2:1).
- 3) Sometimes after we awaken to our sin (Ephesians 2:4-5), we realize that we knew all along that we were doing wrong (Romans 2:15)

- 4) We should put our own name in this verse, "Father, forgive (their name); for he/she does not know what he/she is doing."
- 5) Jesus never fantasized about revenge when on the cross, and He did not confront anyone. His mind was on the ones He would save (Isaiah 53:11).
- 6) He forgave people in the very act of hurting Him.
- 7) He gave His life of His own free will (John 10:18) for all of us, because we are sinners. For that reason it is wrong to blame the Jews.
- 8) When we pray for the salvation of the ones who wronged us, we feel more like adults and less like helpless children still stuck in bad situations.
- 9) When we pray for the salvation of the ones who wronged us, we are praying along with Jesus on the cross.

#### Mark 11:25

#### **Common responses:**

- 1) We must forgive people even if they do not change.
- 2) We need to ask people for forgiveness if we wronged them, so our prayers will not be hindered.
- 3) We need to surrender our grudges, so our prayers will not be hindered.
- 4) Once we have forgiven, our prayers become powerful.
- 5) If we do not forgive the ones who wronged us, we are just as wrong as they are.

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

- 1) When we forgive someone, we give up real or fantasized revenge.
- 2) Their sins will stand between them and God until they repent.
- 3) Continuing to feel pain does not mean that we have not forgiven them. By their very nature, broken relationships are painful.
- 4) Continuing to feel anger at times does not mean we have not forgiven them. Anger can be righteous. However, righteous anger does not lead to sin (James 1:20 & Ephesians 4:26).
- 5) Pretending that we do not feel hurt or angry does not make us less likely to sin.

- 6) We more easily overcome temptation when we admit to God and ourselves that we feel hurt and anger (Psalm 19:12-13).
- 7) Facing hurt and anger in the presence of Jesus is powerful. Abiding in Him means bringing our total selves to Him (John 15:1-6).
- 8) We do not have the ability to forgive others; we are only able to destroy others with our revenge.
- 9) Hurt or anger can remind us to pray for the salvation of those who wronged us; praying for those who wronged us helps us forgive them.
- 10) New believers must especially be encouraged to persist in intercessory prayer, since they have not yet accumulated a record of answers to prayer.
- 11) We can ask God to show us how to deal with the people who have wronged us.
- 12) Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is surrendering self-will and asking God to change our will.
- 13) Sometimes we have to ask God to pour love into our hearts, and sometimes we have to ask Him to force it in.

#### Hebrews 4:15-16

#### **Common responses:**

- 1) Jesus resisted temptation, and we should do the same.
- 2) When we feel tempted, we should go to the Lord because He understands what we are going through.
- 3) If we are honest with Him about our temptations, He will not condemn us, but instead have mercy on us.

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

- 1) Jesus also must have had ssa/ma/tx temptations at least once in His life, yet without sin.
- 2) He therefore knows exactly what overcomers are going through.
- 3) Some Christians are not comfortable acknowledging that Jesus would have had ssa/ma/tx temptations at least once, but the Bible says it, so it is true.

- 4) Some Christians think some temptations are more disgusting than other sins. Those people need to get disgusted at their own sins.
- 5) Jesus has already won the victory over sin, death, and the devil (I Corinthians 15:20, 25, & 56-57).
- 6) We can go before Him and be totally transparent about our sins of deeds, words, thoughts, attitudes, sexual and other fantasies, secret agendas, hidden motivations, pride, and self-deception.
- 7) We can pray the prayer in Psalm 139:23-24, and not be afraid.
- 8) The devil told Jesus every lie that he also tells us. Jesus did not accept the devil's lies.

### Isaiah 53

#### **Common responses:**

- 1) Most see assurance of Jesus paying the full penalty for all of their sins.
- 2) Some have trouble believing that they are completely forgiven for everything.
- 3) Some recognize that Jesus went to the cross so that we would be able to forgive the ones who wronged us.

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

- 1) Affirm that Jesus made full satisfaction on the cross for all of our sins.
- 2) Confront any thought that some sins are so bad that we cannot be forgiven. Reference I Timothy 1:12-17 in light of Acts 22:19-20, 26:9-11, I Corinthians 15:8-10, and 2 Chronicles 33.
- 3) Tell them that the name "Satan" means "accuser"; if we doubt God's mercy, we are believing a lie of the devil. Reference Revelations 12:9-10 and Romans 8:1-4.
- 4) New believers should be admonished to get baptized if they have not yet done so. Baptism means accepting the full covering of the righteousness of God in Christ.
- 5) Focus on verses 4-5. On the cross, Jesus felt every bit of the pain that we felt when we were wronged. He suffered what we and those who wronged us deserve.
- 6) Encourage them to re-read the chapter and insert their own names into the verses where the pronouns "we", "us", and "our" are used.

- 7) When we are wronged, we feel as if we have been robbed of something. We want compensation. Jesus on the cross is our compensation; His agony was our compensation.
- 8) Part of forgiveness involves grieving that of which we have been robbed. Grieving our painful memories in the presence of Jesus, Who bore our griefs and sorrows, is powerful.
- 9) We can surrender our desire to take revenge, because revenge was taken on Jesus.
- 10) We do not deserve even a second of His time on the cross, yet He willingly suffered for 6 hours.
- 11) We do not deserve a drop of His shed blood, but He willingly shed quarts/liters of it.
- 12) He made it possible for the victims of others' sins to be healed and go to heaven. In heaven, our healing will be perfected.
- 13) He gave us everything that we need to be able to forgive others (Ephesians 1:18-20).
- 14) Women who have had abortions need to know that their babies are in heaven. The babies are with Jesus, are surrounded by love, and have forgiven their mothers.

#### Luke 18:9-14

##### **Common responses:**

- 1) Most recognize they need to repent, rather than brag about their good works.
- 2) Some have had bad experiences in churches with hypocrites like the Pharisee.
- 3) Most recognize that honesty and humility before God are necessary.
- 4) Most identify with the tax collector.
- 5) Some realize that at times they have been like the Pharisee.

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

- 1) We are tempted to judge the Pharisee. But we should feel sorry for him, because he must have lived in constant fear and without a moment's peace. He thought one small mistake might remove him from God's favor.
- 2) This might have been Saul before he repented and became Paul.

- 3) Reference Philippians 3:4-8, to see what Paul says about trying to earn God's favor based on good works.
- 4) Such people in church can do a lot of damage to vulnerable souls. They need to be confronted and told that they are also sinners in need of forgiveness.
- 5) The ones who wronged us are like the Pharisee, living in fear that their secret sins might be exposed.
- 6) If we refuse to forgive, we are then like the Pharisee, thanking God that we are not like the people who wronged us.
- 7) Reference Luke 15; the ones who wronged us are lost sheep who have not yet been found and prodigals who have not yet come home.
- 8) If they know someone who is like the Pharisee, they might prayerfully consider if God wants them to speak to that person about His mercy as a free gift.
- 9) They may need to forgive people in the Church who hurt them.

#### Acts 7:51-60

#### **Common responses:**

- 1) Some recognize that they used to resist the Holy Spirit and were stiff-necked.
- 2) Most recognize that Stephan forgave even in the midst of extreme circumstances and left an example to follow.
- 3) If we are martyred for the sake of the Gospel, we will go to heaven.

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

- 1) Stephan sees the glory of God and prays for the ones who are stoning him (Luke 23:34). When we focus on God's glory, we more easily forgive people.
- 2) Other people may torment us for a season, but we pray for them to repent so that they will not be tormented for eternity.
- 3) Sometimes people become very angry when told that they cannot be saved by their good works.
- 4) Stephan gives a witness as he is being martyred. His obedience possibly influenced the conversion of Saul, who watched Stephan die. Reference Acts 8:1, 22:19-20, 26:9-11, and I Corinthians 15:8-10.

- 5) If Stephan had been disobedient, the Church might not have had the blessings that Paul brought to it. He took the Gospel to the Gentiles and wrote much of the New Testament.
- 6) Decades later, Paul would also die a martyr's death.
- 7) Never underestimate the power we have when we pray for those who wronged us. Reference Matthew 5:44-46.
- 8) Often when we have sinned and our consciences are bothering us, we commit even more sin in order to justify our previous sins. Reference Acts 8:1-3 and 26:14.

1. On a scale of 1-10, how much have you improved in your ability to forgive?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many have made significant progress in forgiving some people but have not yet forgiven everyone.
- 3) Many express that forgiveness is becoming easier as they grow in their faith.
- 4) Forgiving family members is often the hardest.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Avoid criticizing a low number or expressions of having a struggle.
- 2) Encourage them to thank and praise God for any progress.
- 3) Reassure them that forgiveness sometimes takes a long time.
- 4) Empathize with the pain. Many have experienced family rejection, hostility from others, sexual and other forms of abuse, exploitation by partners, etc.
- 5) Many had experiences that were shaming and humiliating. Humiliation seems to be the emotion that people find the most difficult to get over.
- 6) Reassure them that the Holy Spirit can guide them through the process of forgiveness.
- 7) Keep their focus on Jesus, Who was hurt, helpless, and humiliated on our behalf.
- 8) Recognize that the devil uses painful experiences as an opportunity to inject lies into the mind of a vulnerable child.

- 9) Part of forgiveness involves identifying those lies and speaking truth against them. Then we can more easily forgive the ones who lied to us. More will be said about this in Unit III.
- 10) Encourage grieving in the presence of Jesus, Who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.
- 11) Encourage them to keep praying for those who wronged them.
- 12) Encourage them to use memorized Scripture to block any fantasies of confronting those who wronged them. Such fantasies lead nowhere.

## 2. What does Jonah 3:4-10 tell us about God?

### **Common responses:**

- 1) Most understand that God has mercy on the truly penitent.
- 2) Some notice the connection between repentance and willingness to obey God.

### **Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm their confidence in the mercy of God.
- 2) Note that the Ninevites' repentance was total, and they surrendered every bit of their self-will.
- 3) Nowhere in the Bible does God refuse to forgive someone who is truly penitent.

## 3. What does Jonah 4:2-4 tell us about us?

### **Common responses:**

- 1) Many recognize that Jonah's priorities were wrong.
- 2) Some recognize that he hoped to please God with his good works.
- 3) Some recognize that we resent God's mercy on others. When we refuse to forgive, we are placing ourselves above God.
- 4) Many ssa/ma/tx overcomers struggle with anger issues and identify with Jonah, while acknowledging that their attitude is wrong.

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

- 1) The Assyrians were raiding Israel's eastern border and causing them national humiliation and terror.
- 2) Jonah probably liked it when they were sitting in sackcloth and pleading for God's mercy.
- 3) What he did not like was God giving them forgiveness.
- 4) To make matters worse, he had preached repentance in Israel, and Israel had not repented of its idolatry. Now he has to see a foreign city on its knees instead of his own country.
- 5) God would not let Jonah stay in that attitude. He will not let us stay in it, either.
- 6) He could have gone into the city, where every home would be open to him; but he sulks in the desert rather than accept the hospitality of a grateful city,.
- 7) Jonah could have enjoyed fellowship with other penitent sinners and told about how he had received mercy in the belly of the big fish.
- 8) He would rather die than admit he was no better than the Ninevites.
- 9) The Ninevites had sinned in ignorance; but as the Lord's prophet, Jonah knew better than to disobey God. He had sinned deliberately. God forgave both.
- 10) We often refuse to forgive others because we fail to recognize the depths of our own depravity.
- 11) When God forgives a sinner, He never asks permission from those whom that sinner has hurt.
- 12) We should be eager to bring the Gospel to those who have hurt us, whether they hurt us individually or as a nation.
- 13) The Gospel is more important than nationalism.

4. What does I John 1:9 tell us about repentance?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most understand that God promises forgiveness to the truly penitent.
- 2) Many emphasize the need to confess everything and hold nothing back.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm their confidence in the mercy of God.

- 2) Some were taught that if they committed the same sin too many times, God would no longer forgive them. This teaching is legalistic and must be confronted.
- 3) We are saints and sinners at the same time. We are not saints because we are especially good; we are saints because we are covered with the righteousness of Christ.
- 4) We will not be perfected in this life. Our struggle with sin will continue until we come before our Lord in heaven.
- 5) Reassure them that Christ has made full satisfaction for our sins, and that we cannot earn even a fraction of our salvation.
- 6) This is a good verse to memorize. We need never despair of the mercy of God.

5. What does God say to you in 2 Corinthians 5:21?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) On the cross, Jesus *became* the sins that we committed.
- 2) He also *became* the sins that others committed against us. He became the violence, rapes, sexual abuse, bullying, verbal abuse, hostility, rejection, etc., that were done against us.
- 3) The sins of the world were crucified with Him (Romans 6:6-11). We can be dead to our sins and also to the sins of those who wronged us.
- 4) We can be dead to our temptations to commit real or fantasized revenge.
- 5) Jesus became our real and fantasized revenge, so that we can become the righteousness of God.
- 6) Encourage them to put their own names in the verse.
- 7) This is a good verse to memorize.

6. How are you doing at avoiding real or fantasized revenge? (Include any fantasies of “making them realize” by throwing the hammar of the Law at them).

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Avoid criticizing any difficulties they express.
- 2) Encourage them to thank and praise God for any progress, however small.
- 3) Any fantasies of revenge need to be stopped by quoting memorized Scripture. The most helpful verses are often the ones that promise God's mercy to us.
- 4) Fantasies of confrontation lead nowhere good (Romans 12:19).
- 5) The Holy Spirit knows best how to convict people of their sin.
- 6) Our job is to pray for the salvation of those who wronged us.
- 7) Romans 2:4 and Titus 3:4 tell us that God's kindness leads people to faith and repentance.
- 8) When God is ready to humble someone who has wronged us, repentance will likely be a private experience between God and that person. We will probably not be allowed to observe.

7. How are you doing at facing the pain without switching to anger in order to feel a phony sense of power?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Avoid criticizing any difficulties they express.
- 2) Encourage them to thank and praise God for any progress, however small.
- 3) Encourage them to grieve in the presence of Jesus and to keep their focus on His finished work on the cross.
- 4) Encourage them to ask the Holy Spirit to identify the lies that may have been injected into their minds at vulnerable times.
- 5) Remind them that behind anger are usually helplessness, fear, and humiliation.

- 6) We use anger to restore our feelings of power, but that is phony power. When we face our helplessness, fear, and humiliation directly, we gain real power (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- 7) Anger can become addictive if the pain is never faced directly.
- 8) Behind feelings of humiliation and shame, we often find lies of the devil. Jesus on the cross despised the shame (Hebrews 12:2), and we can also.
- 9) Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, including the devil's lies (I John 3:8b).
- 10) Encourage them to celebrate with Jesus when they refuse the phony sense of power brought by anger.
- 11) The only victory that we need over our enemies is the victory that Jesus won for us on the cross (I Corinthians 15:25 & 27).

8. What new things about forgiveness have you learned?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Some acknowledge that forgiveness is necessary.
- 3) Some realize that Jesus is in the pain with them.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Encourage them to look to God to redeem the painful events in their lives. Joseph would never have become prime minister of Egypt and saved his family if he had not been sold as a slave (Genesis 37-50).
- 2) Part of forgiveness is accepting the results of the other person's wrong-doing. If someone breaks your leg, forgiveness might mean accepting that you will walk with a limp while looking to God to bring good from it. Reference Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 8:28, which never stop applying.
- 3) The sins committed against them may have affected their personalities in ways they do not like. Encourage them to continue allowing the Holy Spirit to renew them His way.
- 4) Encourage them to spend time alone with God and face the pain in prayer.

- 5) Be patient. Some hurts will take a long time to heal.

9. Have you been able to identify any lies that you have believed, that may have been in your thinking from the time you were young? If so, what are they, and what does the Word tell you differently?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many by this time realize that they are changing, and that the lie they had believed was that they were born ssa/ma/tx.
- 3) Some used to believe that the ssa/ma/tx lifestyle was not wrong, but have since been convicted by the Word that it is wrong.
- 4) Some used to believe that they were worthless and unlovable, but now realize that they had believed a lie.
- 5) Some used to believe that anger was the only way to deal with relationship problems, but now realize that they were wrong.
- 6) Some used to believe that getting revenge was the right thing to do, but now realize that they were wrong.
- 7) Some used to deny that they were hurting children by having sex with them, but now realize that the children were hurt by it.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Avoid any criticism.
- 2) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 3) Encourage them to keep asking the Holy Spirit to help them identify the lies and speak truth against them.
- 4) Encourage them to stay in the Word and let it renew their minds.
- 5) Remind them that I John 1:9 and Romans 8:1 always apply.
- 6) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

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

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) By this time, the numbers are often at the high end of the scale.
- 3) Many have been able to overcome the sins of deeds. The sins of thought may still defeat them.
- 4) Some mention temptations they were able to resist.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Encourage thanks and praise to God for any victory gained
- 2) If the number is high because they have had very little temptation lately, encourage thanks and praise to God.
- 3) If the number is high because they had to fight a lot of temptation and were successful, encourage thanks and praise to God.
- 4) More tests will likely be put in their way, but future tests should not spoil their enjoyment of the victories they have had so far.
- 5) Avoid criticizing a low number. Try to find out the reason for it. Ask about their thoughts, attitudes, stressful situations, how they have been using their time, or if something unexpected has happened.
- 6) If they sin less frequently than before, assure them that God has been working in their lives. Encourage progress, not perfection.
- 7) If they have slipped, encourage them to confess it, accept God's forgiveness, and get back on track.
- 8) Remind them that I John 1:9 and Romans 8:1 always apply.
- 9) Encourage them to retrace their steps and ask the Holy Spirit to give them insight into what weakness led to the fall.
- 10) Encourage confession of sins of thoughts (Romans 12:2), which makes it easier to avoid sins of words and deeds.
- 11) Continue to encourage them to use memorized Scripture to block tempting and negative thoughts. Encourage use of the Emergency Prayer.
- 12) If they view themselves as making very little progress, keep their focus on God's mercy rather than their own failures.

- 13) New Christians do not always understand the difference between temptation and actual sin. Some give themselves a low number; but while the temptation was great, they may not have fallen into sin. Explain the difference to them.
- 14) If they have not had temptation in a long while, they might need to be aware that the devil does not give up easily and may be preparing a major attack. This should not prevent them from enjoying their progress now. Overcomers commonly experience a major attack of temptation before getting the final victory over a besetting sin. If they withstand a big temptation, which can go on for days or weeks, they will usually find themselves that much stronger once it is over.

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

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) By now, most people are memorizing Scripture and seeing benefits.
- 3) Even if they are not actively memorizing, verses may be staying in their minds from their Bible-reading.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) If the answer correlates with the number in #10, 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. Verses that give the consolation of the Gospel to the penitent sinner are powerful and bring change
- 4) If they are having trouble memorizing, they can write down meaningful verses on paper and read them several times throughout the day.

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

**Common responses:**

- 1) Answers will vary.

- 2) Some are noticing fewer ssa/ma/tx temptations and more of other kinds of temptations.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Encourage using Scripture to battle all temptation, sexual or otherwise.
- 2) If they are less tempted to ssa/ma/tx sins, and other temptations are more obvious, they have likely had significant spiritual growth.
- 3) If the number is high, encourage them to continue, especially if they have had a lot of temptation lately.
- 4) If they had no significant temptation lately, they need to memorize in order to be prepared.
- 5) If memorized Scripture does not seem to be effectively blocking temptation, they might have had a lot of temptation lately or are trying to break an old habit. Encourage persistence and consistency.
- 6) Avoid criticizing a low number. Encourage confession of sin and to start using their sword (Ephesians 6:17).
- 7) Remind them of God's promises.

13. 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 pinpoint what might be holding them back.
- 3) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.
- 4) Give encouragement and be patient. These people are often getting many new thoughts and ideas in a short period of time.

Plan of Action:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Be alert for any hidden legalism.
- 3) Give lots of encouragement.
- 4) By this time, many are learning to be Spirit-led and therefore less dependent upon the written Plans of Action.

**Additional points:**

- 1) Part of forgiveness involves giving up fantasies of confronting those who wronged us.
- 2) Confrontation fantasies are powerful. We want to confront those who wronged us with the harm they have done. In our fantasies, they are overwhelmed with remorse and ask our forgiveness.
- 3) Confrontation fantasies seem virtuous and are often justified by the victim who claims, "I only want him/her to realize what he/she has done to me."
- 4) Confrontation fantasies also cause us to rehearse resentments and painful memories.
- 5) Confrontation fantasies can take over our minds and so occupy our thoughts that we are not focused on God's thoughts.
- 6) Confrontation fantasies block true forgiveness, which is based on Jesus' death on the cross.
- 7) Confrontation fantasies often leave us frustrated because they seldom come true in real life.
- 8) The Holy Spirit knows best how to convict people of sin.
- 9) When we are tempted to confrontation fantasies, we can block them with memorized Scripture like any other fantasies.
- 10) Temptation to a confrontation fantasy can remind us to pray for that person's salvation.
- 11) It can also remind us to praise God for the ways in which He has delivered us and continues to deliver us.