

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

- 1) Encourage them to invite deeper examination by the Holy Spirit, Who loves us.
- 2) Recognize that when we confess our sins, we are letting God love us.
- 3) Recognize that we show love for God when we resist temptation.
- 4) Recognize that we show love for God when we surrender self-will.
- 5) Realize that by trusting God's love, we can begin to unlearn habits of mistrust towards other people.
- 6) Learn that by giving God His rightful place in our lives, we become less likely to make an idol of another person.
- 7) Learn that as we learn to love God, we can learn to love others.

I John 4:8**Common responses:**

- 1) If we love God, we love and forgive other people, including our abusers.
- 2) God knows what love is, and we can learn from Him through the Word.
- 3) If we love God, we will show it by how we treat others.
- 4) If we fail to love, we do not really know God, and we need to repent.
- 5) If we treat others kindly, no matter what, our relationship with God will become stronger.
- 6) If we really love others, we will not use them for our lust.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) God's very nature is to love us (Romans 5:8-10).
- 2) We receive God's love through the Word.
- 3) We receive God's love when we confess our sins and receive forgiveness.
- 4) On this earth, we often love in order that others will love us in return.
- 5) We do not easily surrender our desires to be loved in return.

- 6) Children normally want their parents' approval, but longing for approval can become idolatrous.
- 7) We normally respond to rejection and hostility with anger, but we need to ask God to show us how to love rejecting and hostile people.
- 8) Our earthly love is tainted by our sinful nature and selfishness.
- 9) We need to repent of everything in us that does not show love.
- 10) Praying for the salvation of unlovable people is a good way to begin to change our attitudes.
- 11) Forgiveness does not mean that we trust people who are untrustworthy.
- 12) Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation; reconciliation is only possible if the other person repents.
- 13) If the other person repents, we must not be like the older brother in Luke 15.

I John 3:16-20

Common responses:

- 1) Most people comprehend that when we love someone, we are willing to help them.
- 2) Many confess to having been very selfish.
- 3) Jesus laid down His life for us.
- 4) Actions speak louder than words.
- 5) If our hearts condemn us, we need to repent.
- 6) We should help others without ulterior motives.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Encourage them to put faith into action.
- 2) Never criticize anyone who is under conviction of sin. Encourage them to thank God for it. Refer to I John 1:9 and Romans 8:1.
- 3) We can behave lovingly even toward people whom we do not like.
- 4) Loving the unlovable may not change them, but God will bless our obedience (Hebrews 6:10).

- 5) Sometimes our hearts are closed against others because of unconfessed sin. Often it is pride.
- 6) We may need to pray for guidance about how to love difficult people.
- 7) God blesses us when we love without strings attached (Matthew 5:44-46).
- 8) Our love will only be perfected in heaven (I John 3:2 & I Corinthians 13:12).

I John 2:15-17

Common responses:

- 1) If we love God, we will not love our sins.
- 2) If we love God, we will not love material possessions or lust other people's bodies.
- 3) We are only safe if we make God our top priority, because the World keeps changing its values and priorities.
- 4) If we go the World's way, we will be lost forever; if we go God's way, we will have eternal life.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) The World's ways and God's ways are mutually exclusive.
- 2) These are good verses to memorize for when we are tempted by the lust of the eyes.
- 3) Living God's way brings deep joy, which is more satisfactory than the temporary thrills of sin.
- 4) The devil controls us by using the thrills offered by sin (I Peter 5:8).
- 5) When we sin, we will find ourselves wanting more of those thrills.
- 6) When we sin, the thrills will not be as much as we had hoped for.
- 7) When we sin, we will not get to keep the thrills that we had hoped for.
- 8) For these reasons, any sin can become addictive. The Bible says we are slaves of sin (John 8:34 & Romans 6:16-19).
- 9) We will experience many God-pleasing thrills as we discover and practice our gifts and callings from God (Psalm 16, especially verse 11).

I John 3:6-7**Common responses:**

- 1) Some express concern because they see themselves sinning frequently.
- 2) No one can claim to love God and still make sin a habit.
- 3) God tells us right from wrong.
- 4) He will forgive us if asked.
- 5) When we abide in Him, He will take away our sins.
- 6) When we confess our sins, we can have a relationship with Him.
- 7) When we are born again, we abide in Him.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Give reassurance from Romans 7:7-25. Even the Apostle Paul struggled with sin.
- 2) Only Jesus has seen and known the Father, so only He is righteous.
- 3) We can only know the Father through Jesus the Mediator.
- 4) Jesus declares penitent sinners to be righteous before God (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- 5) If we could just see God's holiness as it really is, we would be so overwhelmed with it that our temptations to sin would be blown away (I John 3:2).
- 6) No one is without sin, and no one is perfectible in this life.
- 7) Sinning deliberately is not the same as willingly struggling against temptation.
- 8) The more transparent we are about our sins, the closer we get to Jesus.

1. Do you think that God loves you? Why or why not?**Common responses:**

- 1) Most say 'yes'.
- 2) Many cite God's Word, Jesus' death for our sins, and blessings they have experienced in their Christian walk.
- 3) Rarely does anyone express uncertainty.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblically correct response. Encourage thanks and praise to God.

- 2) If they are uncertain, tell them boldly and confidently that God loves them in Christ, whether they believe it or not.
- 3) If they do not feel loved by God, tell them that the Bible says that they are, so that settles it.
- 4) They may doubt God's love if they are still feeling guilty about their past sins. Keep the focus on God's mercy in Christ.
- 5) Refer to I John 5:9-11 and Romans 1:19-20, which tell us that God and His Creation testify to our spirits.

2. How have you been showing God how much you love Him?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many cite obeying God's will, worshipping, witnessing, serving others, resisting temptation, giving praise and thanks, surrendering self-will, honestly confessing sin, praying and meditating, etc.
- 3) Some express regret that they did not begin their Christian walk earlier in life.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblically correct response.
- 2) Affirm that we love God in response to His mercy and forgiveness, never to earn any merit or favor from Him.
- 3) Although our love is not in order to earn merit or favor from Him, He will bless us when we obey His will.
- 4) We must accept the rewards that He chooses to give us, receive from Him on His terms, and never demand rewards on our own terms. Refer to Hebrews 6:10 and Ephesians 3:20.

3. What is the difference between lust and love?

Common responses:

- 1) Those who were raised in the Church usually know that lust takes and love gives.

- 2) Even those who were not raised in Church, but have gotten into the Word, realize that lust leads to sin, while love does not involve even impure thoughts.
- 3) Love cares deeply, puts the other's interests first, and lasts a long time.
- 4) Lust seeks fast thrills, makes selfish demands, and is greedy.
- 5) Romantic love respects and admires the other person.
- 6) Lust causes trouble and hurt feelings.
- 7) Some express regret at how their lust hurt others.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblically correct response.
- 2) Never criticize anyone who is under conviction of sin. Encourage them to praise God that the Holy Spirit is working in their lives (Ephesians 2:1-5)
- 3) Be aware that for many, this teaching is new.
- 4) Be aware that few of them have ever seen a godly, healthy marriage in which the couple love and respect each other.
- 5) Clarify any confusion as necessary.
- 6) Lust will manipulate, abuse power, attack the other person's worth, and say or do anything to get its desires met. It is irrational, selfish, unreasonable, and untrustworthy.
- 7) Lust will pretend to love only in order to get love from someone else.
- 8) Lust focuses on its own needs, keeps a "scorecard", and feels entitled to be angry if the other person does not do what it wants.
- 9) Lust will give a minimum amount of love but demand a maximum amount of love in return, thereby creating conflict in the relationship.
- 10) Relationships based on lust often end in hatred.
- 11) When God is working in our lives, we experience ourselves as having fewer needs. When husband and wife put God first, they demand less from each other.

4. Do you have any straight same-sex friends whom you truly love? What is that relationship like?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Most ssa/ma/tx overcomers long for a straight same-sex friend who knows all about their past and loves them anyway.
- 3) Those who have such a friend describe the relationship as a huge blessing.
- 4) Older men can fill needs that their fathers did not meet, and older women can fill needs their mothers did not meet.
- 5) Many ssa/ma/tx people are thrilled to have a same-sex friend towards whom they feel no sexual attraction.
- 6) Many ssa/ma/tx people who do not yet have such a relationship wish that they did.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) A significant part of many ssa/ma/tx overcomers' recovery involves forming the right kinds of friendships with heterosexual people of the same sex who know about the overcomers' struggles and love them anyway.
- 2) Ssa/ma/tx overcomers often experienced rejection and hostility from same-sex peers while growing up. They need opportunities to overcome the fear of rejection.
- 3) Church should be an abundant source of such relationships.
- 4) Christian ssa/ma/tx overcomers can help each other by meeting for support, fellowship, accountability, prayer, and friendship. Two or three are enough.
- 5) Learning to relate to others of the same sex in the right way is essential to learning to relate to the opposite sex in the right way.
- 6) Affirm any godly relationships.
- 7) If someone does not yet have such a friend, suggest that he/she pray about it and ask God to point him/her to the right people to seek as friends.
- 8) For many, sex has been their only way of bonding with the same sex. Non-sexual friendships with others of same sex is new territory. Be patient as they explore how to do this.

5. Did you truly love your same-sex partners? How did that relationship(s) differ from your non-sexual friendships?

Common responses:

- 1) Most men will say that their same-sex partnerships involved lust rather than love, and also involved jealousy, possessiveness, insecurity, and conflict.
- 2) A few men will say that there was real love, loyalty, belonging, and friendship in their relationships, but these are the exceptions.
- 3) Men attracted to minors will often say that they truly loved the children they contacted for sexual purposes, but that sexualizing those feelings was wrong. If they could have kept the relationships non-sexual, the love was genuine caring.
- 4) Lesbians are more likely to have long-term, monogamous relationships and state that they loved their partners.
- 5) However, lesbian relationships can also be full of jealousy, possessiveness, insecurity, and conflict.
- 6) Some will express regret over their former sins.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm the difference between love and lust.
- 2) Never criticize anyone under conviction of sin. Encourage them to praise God that the Holy Spirit is working in their lives (Ephesians 2:1-5).
- 3) Avoid putting ssa/ma/tx relationships in a separate category or in any way implying that ssa/ma/tx sins are worse than other sexual sins.
- 4) Be mindful that heterosexual relationships may involve jealousy, possessiveness, insecurity, and conflict if the couple does not give God first place in their lives.
- 5) Affirm anything positive in the relationships, just as you would if it were a heterosexual relationship. No earthly relationship is free of sin, especially selfishness.
- 6) Raise the question why the love, loyalty, belonging, and friendship were not available without sex being a requirement and a way to bond.

- 7) Be mindful that many were sexually abused at an early age, grew up confusing love with sex, and assumed that sex was a part of any close relationship no matter the age or gender of the other person.
- 8) Be mindful that ssa/ma/tx sins were more about meeting emotional needs than sexual needs.
- 9) Assure them that the more they learn to have non-sexual friendships with others of the same sex, the less tempting ssa/ma/tx lusts will be.
- 10) Unless God has first place in their lives, they could end up in heterosexual relationships in which there is jealousy, possessiveness, insecurity, and conflict, which are no more godly than the ssa/ma/tx relationships they have ended.
- 11) Church should be a place to find love, loyalty, belonging, and friendship of the right kind.

6. Do you love yourself? What are you doing to love yourself more?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many are learning to see themselves the way God sees them, and realizing that their low self-esteem was based on the devil's lies about them.
- 3) Many say that learning to love themselves is a process, and that they are making progress.
- 4) Answers may include giving up negative self-talk, avoiding self-destructive behaviors, living a healthier lifestyle, taking time for themselves, giving up suicidal thoughts, spending time on constructive hobbies, finding godly uses for their talents, getting more education and job training, etc.
- 5) Some are feeling discouraged because of the messes they have made of their lives.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical responses or insights.
- 2) Encourage self-esteem based on accepting God's esteem of them.
- 3) Encourage constructive choices.

- 4) Ssa/ma/tx overcomers, when they were children, developed a “false self” and then acted upon it.
- 5) The “false self” is an effort to compensate for low self-esteem.
- 6) The low self-esteem is based on lies. The “false self” is based on lies.
- 7) They may have lived in the “false self” for so long that it seems normal.
- 8) The “false self” is an adaptation that they used in order to function in society, get needs met, deal with negative emotions, and cope with pain.
- 9) In order to give up the “false self”, they need to become fully transparent before God and accept by faith His love and forgiveness (Hebrews 2:17-18 & 4:15-16).
- 10) Maa’s have especially low self-esteem. They turned to children because they expected rejection from other adults.
- 11) Remind them of how God used the Apostle Paul in spite of his past (Philippians 3:13-14).
- 12) Counter negative thinking with relevant Scriptures (Ephesians 2:10, Jeremiah 29:11, Joel 2:25).
- 13) These people may be looking at themselves realistically for the first time after decades of living in a fantasy world, and they may have difficulty accepting what they see.
- 14) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

7. What are you doing to love others more?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Answers may include praying for others, not judging them, forgiving others, trying to understand them, speaking nicely, helping others, not treating them like sexual objects, trying to cheer those who are sad, etc.
- 3) Some say that they are working on themselves so that they can love better.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblically correct thinking, speech, and actions.
- 2) Encourage them to continue.
- 3) Avoid criticizing any difficulties they are having with other people.
- 4) If they need advice on loving difficult people, encourage them to first pray for that person's salvation, situation, family, etc.
- 5) They can pray and ask God to show them ways to show love to others.
- 6) Be aware that some people will continue to respond in negative ways no matter how loving we try to be to them. Some people, especially in certain families or in environments such as prison, seem committed to being negative.
- 7) If your overcomer is doing his/her best, he/she should not feel guilty about the other person's problem. He/she can celebrate with Jesus for being more loving.
- 8) Counter negative thinking, speech, and actions with relevant Scriptures.
- 9) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

8. What have you learned about LOVE as you work through the Keys?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many recognize that God is the source of love; and the more of His ways we learn, the more loving we will become.
- 3) Many are confronting their own selfishness for the first time.
- 4) Many see the connection between receiving God's love and overcoming their sin.
- 5) Many have only recently learned that love is an action verb, not just an emotion.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblically responses or insights.
- 2) Encourage them to continue making progress and to have patience with themselves and others.
- 3) Avoid criticizing anyone under conviction of sin. Remind them that their selfish ways are under God's forgiveness (I John 1:9 & Romans 8:1).

- 4) Be mindful that much of what they are learning is new information. Many grew up in families that did not teach real love.
- 5) If they are behaving more kindly, gently, and patiently with others, others may not be accustomed to their new behaviors and may not yet trust them. Encourage them to keep building trust with others and ask for forgiveness if necessary.
- 6) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

9. 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.

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 possibility 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.

10. 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 #9, 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.

11. 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.

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 so 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) Many overcomers have reported experiences of thinking ungodly thoughts very unlike anything they have ever thought of before. Such thoughts can include blasphemous thoughts, sexual perversions, sudden thoughts of violence, thoughts of angry outbursts, etc.
- 2) They feel less like the thoughts are coming from their own minds and more like intrusive thoughts from outside of themselves. The sexual thoughts often bear no resemblance to any fantasy they have ever had. These occur without warning and do not seem to be a response to a triggering event.
- 3) These thoughts are likely demonic attacks. Rebuke them in Jesus Name and pray the Emergency Prayer.
- 4) The overcomers should not dwell on these thoughts, worry about them, or take them seriously.
- 5) They should interpret these experiences as a sign of progress. The devil is losing control of them, is frantically seeking to get them back, and is therefore trying a wide variety of temptations to see if the overcomers will respond favorably.

- 6) They should give Jesus thanks and praise that they have come this far. The devil flees when we lift up praise. Playing praise and worship music in one's house or room is also helpful.