

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM HANDBOOK**UNIT III Key 2****FAITH****Purpose of this Key:**

- 1) Recognize how painful experiences in childhood set up distorted thinking.
- 2) Recognize how distorted thinking can influence us for decades.
- 3) Recognize the Holy Spirit's role in exposing distorted thinking.
- 4) Recognize that God's Word speaks truth against distorted thinking.
- 5) Recognize how we often assume that God is like the parent with whom we had trouble when we were children.
- 6) Learn to look for the distorted thinking when recalling a painful memory.
- 7) Learn to rely on the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance to protect our minds.

Psalm 91**Common responses:**

- 1) God protects us from spiritual, physical, and emotional danger.
- 2) We can trust God with our security.
- 3) God will heal the hurts from our past.
- 4) God will protect us from temptation.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) When we experience painful memories, terrifying flashbacks, and bad dreams, we can read this Psalm for encouragement.
- 2) As we face our painful memories from childhood, we might experience strong emotions. Anger is usually a covering for fear.
- 3) This Psalm assures us that we can be safe even if we do not feel safe.
- 4) We need never face the painful memories alone. Jesus is in the pain with us. He felt every bit of it on the cross (Isaiah 53:4-5).

- 5) If the overcomer is having bad dreams at night, or sensing demonic attacks, suggest he/she memorize this Psalm and fall asleep reciting it. Note especially verses 5 and 6.

John 10:10

Common responses:

- 1) Most describe specific ways in which sin destroyed their lives.
- 2) Most recognize that Jesus is restoring their lives.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) This verse can point to the power of sin and the devil to destroy our lives.
- 2) In its context (John 9:40-41), it can also point to the power of work's righteousness to destroy our lives (Galatians 3:10-14).
- 3) When we have faith in His mercy, Jesus will give us far more than the devil ever stole from us.
- 4) The more we grow in Christ, the more He will give us.
- 5) He will help us fix the problems that our sins caused, if we do it His way.
- 6) Jesus went to the cross so that He can take a destroyed life and turn it into a monument to His glory (Psalm 16:11).
- 7) Be aware that some of these people have been through exceptionally bad experiences in life. The more of their lives they allow God to redeem, the more abundant life becomes.

John 10:14-16

Common responses:

- 1) We need to follow God's plan for our lives.
- 2) Jesus knows me and is my Shepherd.
- 3) God protects us and loves us.
- 4) We can help other lost sheep.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) God speaks to us through Word and Sacrament.
- 2) We can re-build our lives under His direction.
- 3) We need to be in the Word so that the Holy Spirit can expose our distorted thinking.
- 4) The more we are in the Word, confessing our sins and surrendering to God's will, the more clearly we can hear His voice (John 10:3-5). Our faith grows, and we have greater peace.
- 5) If we are feeling confused about something we have heard, we can ask the Holy Spirit, "Is this true?" Every thought must be tested against the Word of God.
- 6) In the morning, we can plan our day with His guidance.
- 7) We can ask God how He wants us to handle specific situations or people.
- 8) Listening for God's leading and guidance is much easier than living according to our own self-will.
- 9) We need to remember that we are never alone. As penitent sinners saved through God's mercy in Christ, we all follow the True Shepherd together.

John 20:24-31

Common responses:

- 1) Some state that they now live by faith and do not expect everything to be proven.
- 2) The real test of faith is when we cannot see what God is doing.
- 3) God is gracious to us as we struggle with faith.
- 4) Thomas was given the evidence he asked for.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Thomas only asked for the same evidence the other disciples had been given.
- 2) He was not willing to just follow the crowd. He was an independent thinker.
- 3) Jesus graciously offered that evidence. The text does not say if Thomas actually accepted Jesus' offer of evidence; perhaps His offering it was enough.
- 4) Jesus was not angry with Thomas' struggle to believe, He will not be angry with us, and He is willing to help if we ask (Luke 17:5).
- 5) Faith grows as we struggle with our doubts.

- 6) Note verses 29-31. The Holy Spirit had not yet come. The Holy Spirit through the Word builds our faith.
- 7) Thomas showed great faith when he took the Gospel to India, outside the borders of the Roman Empire. There he died a martyr's death. Fifteen hundred years later, European explorers found Christians in western India, who traced their origins to the Apostle Thomas.

I Corinthians 16:13-14

Common responses:

- 1) Some see a need to be alert to temptations.
- 2) Some see a need to be in prayer frequently.
- 3) Some realize that they can be strong and courageous.
- 4) Some realize that they become stronger by loving others as Christ has loved them.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Facing the truth makes us stronger (John 8:32 & 36).
- 3) Facing reality without our fantasies makes us stronger.
- 4) Sexual fantasies are unloving and feed our selfishness.
- 5) In heroic fantasies, we imagine ourselves to be virtuous, ignore our weaknesses, and avoid the hard work of developing real virtues.
- 6) Confrontation fantasies rehearse our hurts and block true forgiveness.
- 7) Fantasies reinforce our feelings of entitlement, so we are more tempted to become angry at people who do not act like the characters in our fantasies.
- 8) We become stronger against temptation when we become willing to love the people who have wronged us.
- 9) We become stronger against temptation when we face painful memories without flipping into anger (James 1:20).
- 10) We become stronger against temptation when we pray for the salvation of the ones who wronged us (Matthew 5:44).

- 11) We become stronger when we surrender to God's will, even when our self-will fights back.

1. Have you ever prayed the prayer in Luke 17:5? If so, what was the result? If not, is anything stopping you?

Common responses:

- 1) Most say 'yes'.
- 2) Most say that their faith grew.
- 3) Some say that their faith grew through experiencing trials and hardship, during which God showed His power.
- 4) Some say that it grew through the Word and prayer.
- 5) A few never thought to pray such a prayer, but plan to start.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Encourage them to pray that prayer when they feel confused or need direction. God will honor it.
- 3) Emphasize that the Word increases our faith (Romans 10:17), but we can also ask God to increase it.
- 4) God will put faith-testing and faith-building experiences in our lives so that He can show His power.
- 5) The Christian walk is a series of tests, and we should expect them. They help us grow.
- 6) God will show us that we can trust His Word, and that our battle armor (Ephesians 6:10-18) will get us through the tests (Romans 5:3-5 & James 1:2-4).

2. Do you, or have you, experienced any of the following: depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, craving for mood-altering chemicals, uncontrollable anger, or anything else you sense God bringing to your mind?

Common responses:

- 1) Most check several, and some check all.

- 2) Many indicate that these feelings are now mostly in the past or have diminished.
- 3) Notes in the margin might offer more explanation.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) These feelings are the normal results of the backgrounds from which many of them have come.
- 2) Distorted thinking is behind these feelings, but knowing the truth will set them free (John 8:32).

3. Are you aware of what lies are feeding those feelings, and if so, what?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many believed that they were worthless and unlovable.
- 3) Many believed that they did not belong, and that people will continually reject them.
- 4) Some believed that they had made too many bad choices in life, and that life could never get better.
- 5) Some believed that the world owed them better treatment
- 6) Some believed that they must always be in control.
- 7) Some believed suicide would end their problems.
- 8) Some believed that acting out their anger or desire for chemicals was healthy and normal, because others were doing it.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Commend any honest insights. We need to identify our distorted thinking before we can replace it with truth.
- 2) The next time they feel these emotions coming on, they can immediately get into prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to show them the specific thoughts that are causing the feelings (Psalm 139:23-24).
- 3) Encourage them to continue looking to the Holy Spirit to replace the distorted thoughts with truth from the Word (John 8:32 & 36).

- 4) Encourage them to thank God for every insight they gain.
- 5) They need to avoid fantasies in which they receive friendship, approval, understanding, loyalty, power, admiration, and belonging; and in which they are never rejected, always successful, and in total control. Such fantasies prevent them from gaining real strength and can become idolatrous.
- 6) Depression is often caused by low self-esteem. Confront the thoughts that lower self-esteem. God never created anyone who is worthless (Ephesians 2:10).
- 7) Besides confronting the negative thoughts, depressed people need to learn to obey God's direction and guidance rather than to reinforce depression by excessive sleeping, TV, reading, etc.
- 8) Anxiety is often caused by fear of losing control. The truth is that none of us truly has control. We need to surrender to God's will.
- 9) Mood-altering chemicals are often used to cope with painful emotions, painful memories, and feelings of powerlessness. Behind these are distorted thoughts they have believed.
- 10) Chemicals often seem like the only way to block feelings of shame and humiliation. On the cross, Jesus despised the shame (Hebrews 12:2), so we can also. Of all the human emotions, shame and humiliation seem to be the hardest to overcome; but they are based on lies, and the Word can speak truth against them.
- 11) Behind uncontrollable anger are often feelings of helplessness and fear. Behind these are distorted thoughts they have believed.
- 12) Suicidal feelings can result when people believe that they have no future and no hope. John 10:10 Jeremiah 29:11, Joel 2:25, & Romans 8:28 always apply.
- 13) If someone is currently suicidal, you need to get them professional help immediately. They need to get to a safe place if they have a lethal plan and the means to carry it out.
- 14) Some people might need professional help to deal with these mental states. The Keys program is not a substitute for professional help when necessary, nor should anyone discontinue psychotropic medication without medical supervision.
- 15) Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8b). The lies and the effects of the lies are the works of the devil.

4. What does the Word of God say about the lies (Colossian 2:8)?**Common responses:**

- 1) Jesus sets us free from the lies.
- 2) The devil uses lies to take advantage of us.
- 3) We need to believe what the Bible says.
- 4) Some note that the “traditions of men” claim that some sins are worse than others, but that is not what the Bible says.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) If we are studying the Word, praying, confessing our sins, living transparently before God, and obeying God’s will, the Holy Spirit will expose our distorted thinking and show us the truth.
- 2) Speaking Scripture against distorted thoughts is powerful.
- 3) The “empty philosophies” and “traditions of men” may include distorted beliefs that have been handed down from previous generations, and that are specific to each family, ethnic group, culture, and nation.
- 4) We can honor our father and mother (Exodus 20:12) and still be realistic about the distorted beliefs they handed down to us. We can be patriotic and still confess our national sins.
- 5) To get from Exodus 20:5 into verse 6, we need to confess our sins and let the Holy Spirit change our lives by changing our thinking.
- 6) Ezekiel 18 shows how generational sin can be interrupted by a life of faith.

5. What is the solution to the lies (Colossians 2:3-7)?**Common responses:**

- 1) Be rooted in Christ, Who tells us the truth.
- 2) Challenge everything one hears with the Word of God.
- 3) Study the Word and pray in order to build our faith.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Bring every issue back to the mercy of God in Christ. If they brought up specific lies they were told, share verses that speak against the lies.
- 3) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

6. On a scale of 1-10, 10 being the most painful and 1 being the least painful, how would you rate your childhood and adolescence?

Common responses:

- 1) High numbers are the norm. Some add comments to illustrate how painful it was.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Jesus went to the cross to redeem our painful pasts.
- 2) Painful childhoods include bad secrets that children are not allowed to talk about.
- 3) The Holy Spirit wants to shine His light of truth onto the distorted beliefs that we were taught and bring the truth that sets us free (John 8:32 & 36).
- 4) When the distorted beliefs attached to a painful memory are exposed and truth spoken against them, the memory often becomes less painful. More will be said about this process in Key 4.
- 5) When distorted beliefs are replaced by truth, we often remember our pasts differently. The more truth we discover, often the more we remember our pasts differently, and we feel more free.
- 6) Encourage them to let the Holy Spirit continue working on the painful memories, His way.
- 7) Even our former sins will work together for good (Romans 8:28). Remind them that they are called “according to His purpose”.
- 8) Someday they might have opportunities to witness to their families. I Corinthians 1:26-28 sometimes applies to our kinship groups.

7. What promise is found in Colossians 3:3-4? How do you apply it to your memories of childhood and adolescence?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Jesus enters into our darkest secrets, redeems painful memories with His truth, and brings deliverance from the lies of the devil.
- 2) As He replaces our distorted beliefs with the light of truth, we get closer to Jesus.
- 3) He will bring something redemptive out of all the pain and suffering we experienced; we just have to be open to it (Hebrews 6:10 & Matthew 25:21 &23).
- 4) We can ask Him how He plans to restore the time that we wasted serving the devil (Joel 2:25).
- 5) He went through our pain on the cross so that He could redeem it and deliver us from it (Revelations 21:4).
- 6) He keeps our hearts and minds safe in His love (John 15:9).

8. What difficulty is described in 2 Corinthians 4:7, and what is the promise?**Common responses:**

- 1) We live in earthly vessels that are weak and can suffer.
- 2) Jesus is our Treasure, so we are not defeated by suffering.
- 3) Jesus shows His power through our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- 4) In heaven, we will finally be free of suffering.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) We are the earthen vessels, and Jesus is our Treasure.
- 2) Therefore we still sin, experience suffering, and have limitations.
- 3) Jesus does incredible work in us despite our limitations (2 Corinthians 12:6-10).
- 4) Our sinful nature influences how we interpret our past experiences.
- 5) God sees the bigger picture of our lives, and He is trying to show it to us (I Corinthians 13:12).

9. 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) 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 have 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 are using their time, or if anything 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 them to confess sins of thoughts (Romans 12:2) in order to more easily 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. Encourage them to pray for rescue immediately when tempted.

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

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) By this time, most have learned to use the Word effectively against temptation.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.

11. 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.
- 2) Most report that things are going well.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Encourage thanks and praise to God for whatever is going well.
- 2) If things are not going well, try to find out the reason.
- 3) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

Plan of Action:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.

- 2) Give lots of encouragement and reassurance.
- 3) This Plan of Action comes with a note of caution. The ssa/ma/tx overcomer needs to feel safe. He/she should not proceed too quickly. Never push him/her beyond his/her comfort point. You may just need to do a lot of listening. Pray with him/her. Keep the focus on Jesus' love. He is the Shepherd, Who is coming into their pain.

Additional points:

- 1) Some ssa/ma/tx overcomers are so used to staring at attractive people that they do not always realize that they are doing so.
- 2) An overcomer can ask the Holy Spirit to alert him/her them when he/she notices someone attractive.
- 3) The overcomer can then catch him/herself before taking the second look, pray the Emergency Prayer, and refocus his/her attention elsewhere. *Jesus, stop me! Get me out of this! Stop me even if I don't want to be stopped*, or similar prayer.
- 4) Job 31:1 refers to Job making a covenant with his eyes. We can do likewise.