

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM HANDBOOK**UNIT III Key 1****DESIRE****Purpose of this Key:**

- 1) Recognize how distorted thinking blocks spiritual growth.
- 2) Recognize how traumatic events in our past, especially in childhood, can result in distorted thinking.
- 3) Become aware of the warning signals of distorted thinking.
- 4) Learn to rely on the Holy Spirit to make us alert to the signals.
- 5) Become aware of how distorted thinking leads to temptations to sin.
- 6) Learn to rely on the Holy Spirit to speak truth from the Word against distorted thinking.
- 7) Accept that facing painful memories is necessary.
- 8) Remain aware that Jesus is in our pain with us.
- 9) Learn the value of having a Christian brother or sister to serve as a confessor.

I Timothy 1:12-17**Common responses:**

- 1) God's mercy changes our lives.
- 2) We are saved because we needed mercy; we never deserved it.
- 3) No sin is too big for God to forgive.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Consider this passage in light of Acts 8:1-3, 22:19-20, 26:9-11, & I Corinthians 15:8-10.
- 2) However great our sin, Jesus is a greater Savior.
- 3) God had a job for the Apostle Paul, and He will have one for any penitent sinner (Ephesians 2:10 & I Corinthians 1:26-28).
- 4) This passage is especially helpful for people who feel guilty over past sins: murder, child abuse, abortions, satanic worship, sexual crimes, etc.
- 5) This passage is also helpful if someone tries to judge us for our past sins.

- 6) Refer to 2 Chronicles 33: Manasseh sacrificed his own children to the devil. God forgave him and made him king again, and he brought reform to his country.
- 7) In His mercy, God sometimes gives us chances to undo some damage done by our former sins.
- 8) Sometimes we are not aware of how God is using us. The final plea for mercy by the penitent thief has been a witness to millions of people for 2000 years (Luke 23:42).

Romans 14:22

Common responses:

- 1) Anything God approves is good.
- 2) We should not judge others.
- 3) We should live for the Lord, not ourselves.
- 4) My faith is between and God and me, and it does not matter what the World says.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Our faith is supposed to bless others, not judge them.
- 2) This chapter is about making choices about actions that God neither requires nor forbids. The Greek word is *adiaphora*.
- 3) Our consciences must be informed by the Word of God.
- 4) Different believers draw the lines in different places, such as what clothes are modest enough, what movies are acceptable to see, etc.
- 5) When believers disagree, they should err on the side of caution and defer to those who have stronger limits so that others will not be tempted to do something that they regard as a sin.
- 6) Be aware that other believers may be tempted by situations that we do not find tempting, and we need to avoid causing others to stumble.
- 7) In humility and love, we should accommodate the weaker person.
- 8) Quarrels in churches, and sometimes in families, could be avoided if this principle was consistently practiced.

Luke 3:8**Common responses:**

- 1) We need to bear good fruit.
- 2) Our changed lives testify to the truth of the Gospel.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) The first fruit of repentance is trusting entirely in the free gift of God's forgiveness through the finished work of Jesus on the cross.
- 2) Our good works cannot save us (Romans 8:3-4).
- 3) Repentance is not attempting to fix ourselves so that we can come before God and display our good works; repentance is recognizing the depth of our sin and our total need for forgiveness.
- 4) Jesus on the cross has made full satisfaction for all of our sins.
- 5) Faith relies on the mercy of Christ to work change into our lives.
- 6) As we continue to drown our sins in on-going repentance and to accept the offered forgiveness, the Holy Spirit changes us.
- 7) Good works result from faith in Jesus' offer of forgiveness.
- 8) Refer them to Galatians 5:22-23 for a list of the fruits of the Spirit.
- 9) We need to focus on our own fruits of repentance and not judge others.
- 10) Religious tradition and heritage cannot save us.

Luke 14:25-33**Common responses:**

- 1) We must love God before anything else.
- 2) There is a cost to following Christ.
- 3) In order to be delivered from our sins, we need to put God's will first in our lives.
- 4) We need to hate our sins.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) When we witness to someone, we need to be honest about what it might cost them to follow Jesus.

- 2) Lifestyle, friendships, future plans, and daily habits may all have to change.
- 3) Nothing will be safe from the Holy Spirit's scrutiny.
- 4) Relationships can be idolatrous. Our friends and families might try to come between God and us.
- 5) We love others better when we love God first.
- 6) We might experience a season of loneliness as we give up harmful relationships, before we develop helpful relationships.
- 7) The devil will lie and tell us that the cost is too great.
- 8) The cost will always be worth gaining the mercy of God in Christ (Matthew 16:24-26).

Proverbs 9:8-11

Common responses:

- 1) We need to accept constructive criticism.
- 2) We need to appreciate good instruction.
- 3) We should be humble enough to ask for help when we need it.
- 4) We need to learn from the Holy Spirit.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) We need trustworthy people who will give us honest feedback in a spirit of love.
- 2) The World sometimes surrounds us with lies.
- 3) A wise person seeks truth, even if facing reality is painful.
- 4) We need to be humble enough to accept criticism if it is truthful.
- 5) We should avoid people who give us untruthful criticism in a spirit of pride.
- 6) The Holy Spirit through the Word will help us discern truth from lies.
- 7) Notice the blessing promised in verse 11.

1. Overcoming any addictive sin involves facing pain. Confronting the pain may lessen our enthusiasm for overcoming. Why is facing the pain worthwhile (Romans 5:3-5)?

Common responses:

- 1) We must face the consequences of our actions even though God has forgiven us.
- 2) Facing the pain, instead of acting it out in sinful ways, makes us stronger against temptation.
- 3) Facing the pain makes our faith stronger, and we become more loving.
- 4) Facing the pain is how we heal from it.
- 5) Because pain produces perseverance, character, and hope (Romans 5:4).

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Facing pain is a necessary part of forgiveness.
- 3) As we face our painful memories, we can learn to avoid using anger to restore the sense of power that was taken away from us.
- 4) As we face our painful memories, we can ask the Holy Spirit to show us the distorted thinking that was injected into our minds during trauma.
- 5) Whenever children are feeling fear, trauma, shame, humiliation, helplessness, pain, or attacks against their self-esteem, etc., those are moments when distorted thoughts are injected.
- 6) Long after the original trauma has stopped, and we are in better circumstances, painful memories and distorted thinking can continue to have a powerful influence on our lives.
- 7) These lies are often very specific to each individual. The Holy Spirit knows what they are, how to bring them to our awareness, and how best to speak truth against them.
- 8) When we recall painful memories, we can spend time alone with God and ask Him to show us what He is trying to teach us.
- 9) When we have a negative mood, such as fear, anger, shame, humiliation, sadness, loneliness, or low self-esteem, or are recalling painful memories, we can ask the Holy Spirit if a lie is behind the negative mood.
- 10) Sometimes our negative emotions are because we are hungry or tired, or they are appropriate responses to a situation.

- 11) Sometimes our negative emotions are because a lie has been activated in our minds, and our negative mental states make us more vulnerable to temptation. John 8:32 & 36 prove themselves to be true.

2. Why is it necessary to confess our sins to God when He already knows what we have done?

Common responses:

- 1) We are commanded to do so.
- 2) Confession shows that we recognize our sins and are sorry for them.
- 3) In order to change, we must acknowledge that we have a problem.
- 4) Confession means that we are no longer in denial, and that we do not blame others.
- 5) Confession makes us humbly dependent on God's forgiveness.
- 6) Confession helps us realize how much Jesus has done to save us.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) In order to overcome sin, we must be transparent before God (Hebrews 4:15-16).
- 3) Our faith and love become stronger as we accept God's forgiveness.

3. On a scale of 1-10, 10 being the easiest and 1 being the hardest, how easy or hard is it for you to confess to God when you recognize a sin in your life? Please explain your answer.

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Some find it difficult to admit when they are wrong.
- 3) Some hesitate to confess because they are afraid they will do the same sin again.
- 4) Most have learned by now that confessing a sin is easier than holding onto it.
- 5) God's mercy and forgiveness as a free gift makes confession easy.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm confessing quickly.
- 2) Some are concerned that if they sin too many times, God will eventually stop forgiving them. Give assurance that I John 1:9 and Romans 8:1 never stop applying to the penitent sinner. Such fear will block their spiritual growth and make overcoming habitual sin harder. Drowning one's sin in continuous repentance and trusting in God's mercy in Christ are necessary for one's victory.
- 3) We can only come to Christ as we are; we cannot clean ourselves up first; we can only let Him clean us up.
- 4) Legalism prevents people from confessing sin because they do not trust God's mercy and forgiveness.
- 5) Repentance often begins with our admission that God is right and that we have been wrong.
- 6) We can repent even when we do not feel penitent or guilty, because the Bible says we have been wrong.
- 7) Acknowledging that God is right and we have been wrong, because the Bible says so, is often the first step to opening ourselves to genuine conviction of sin.
- 8) To be honest with God, we must confess that we do not always want to give up our sins.
- 9) Holding back during confession is pointless. God knows everything about us anyway; and the more transparent we are before Him, the more He can change us.
- 10) Every temptation we have ever had, Jesus had at least once during His earthly life (Hebrews 2:17-18). He knows how strong our temptations are, because He allowed Himself to feel them.
- 11) The more we confess our sins, the more we will desire to confess our sins (Psalm 32:3-5).
- 12) God is waiting for us to confess our sins so that He can forgive us (I John 1:8-9).

4. Where do you see the fruits of repentance? (Matthew 3:8)?

Common responses:

- 1) Some note that their lives are changing, they are getting rid of their sins, and they are becoming more Christ-like.

- 2) Some cite specific changes.
- 3) Some note that change proceeds from the inside out.
- 4) Some have become more forgiving and loving.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) The first fruit of repentance is assurance that we are saved only and entirely by Jesus' Atonement on the cross, where He made full satisfaction for all our sins.
- 2) Good works result from faith in what Jesus did on our behalf.
- 3) Refer to Galatians 5:22-23, which lists the fruits of the Spirit.

5. What does James 5:16 tell us to do? Do you find that easy or hard?**Common responses:**

- 1) Confess our sins to each other.
- 2) Pray for each other.
- 3) Most find this hard because many people are not trustworthy.
- 4) We more easily confess to people who do not judge.
- 5) Some find that the more they confess to others, the easier it becomes.
- 6) Some experience God's power when they pray with their confessor.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) A good confessor neither condemns nor condones us, but assures us that the mercy of God is sufficient to cover our sins.
- 2) Confessing to the wrong person can lead to trouble.
- 3) Finding the right confessor is a great blessing.
- 4) Good confessors are humbly aware of their own sins and willing to confess them to others.
- 5) Good confessors do not treat any sins as better or worse before our Savior's cross.
- 6) Nothing shocks them, they never repeat a confidence, and they believe God can redeem anyone (Isaiah 59:1).
- 7) Some are skilled at helping us see the "sin behind the sin". They can discern the distorted thinking behind our sins.

- 8) If they can do nothing else, they will pray with us.
- 9) Good confessors let the Holy Spirit work through them.
- 10) Ssa/ma/tx people need to be particularly careful to whom they confess, especially if they have committed illegal acts. The confessor might be legally required to report it. Confessing to the temptations, and then observing the person's reaction, may be safer.

6. Do you have someone in your life with whom you can do this? If so, what do you find most helpful about that relationship?

Common responses:

- 1) Those who have a confessor note that the confessor never judges and sincerely wants to help them live a better life.
- 2) They feel better when they have confessed to another person who does not judge.
- 3) The confessor sees them the way Jesus does.
- 4) The confessor prays with them.
- 5) You might be the only confessor this person has. You may be setting the standard for all other confessors this person has in the future.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Same as in #5.
- 2) Their pastors might be good confessors. Pastors are trained to not reveal confidences. However, pastors in many countries are required by law to report child abuse.
- 3) Discernment is necessary. They can ask the Holy Spirit to point them to the right people to be their confessors.
- 4) Until that happens, they need to confess to the Lord only.
- 5) Many ssa/ma/tx overcomers find it very healing to have an ever-straight Christian friend to whom they can confess their issues, who will never judge, who loves them unconditionally, and who sees parallels between his own lust for women and the ssa/ma/tx overcomer's attractions.

- 6) A few have confessors who have successfully overcome ssa/ma/tx temptations, and who share helpful insights.
- 7) Tell the overcomer that he/she might be a confessor for someone else some day.

7. From what you have learned in the Keys so far, what lies have you discovered that you once believed, that you believe no longer?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Most believed that they were born ssa/ma/tx and could not change.
- 3) Some believed that they were unlovable.
- 4) Most believed that they were going hell, and that they were beyond the reach of God's redemption.
- 5) Many thought that there was nothing wrong with ssa/ma/tx sex, but now realize that they were deceived.
- 6) Some mention specific distorted thoughts that they learned in childhood.
- 7) The minor-attracted adults often realize by now that children are to be protected, not used for sex.
- 8) Some now realize now that they can be friends with others of the same sex without the relationship becoming sexual.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Realizing that they were not born ssa/ma/tx is a big step toward victory. Many spent most of their lives believing that they were born that way and could not change, and that help was unavailable.
- 3) Basing their identities on their relationships with Christ, not on their sexual attractions, is another big step toward victory.
- 4) We no longer live for our own desires; we now live to obey Christ, because He died for us (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).
- 5) Realizing that they could only be saved by God's mercy in Christ is also a big step toward victory.

- 6) Only the Holy Spirit convicting them through the Word could make them realize that ssa/ma/tx sex is sinful.
- 7) They should not judge their parents, but they do need to be realistic about the distorted thinking that they learned from their backgrounds.
- 8) To forgive their parents and caretakers, they need to be realistic about the damage that was done, so they know what they are forgiving them for, and can more easily avoid repeating the same mistakes with their own children.
- 9) Encourage them to continue inviting the Holy Spirit to search them (Psalm 139:23-24), expose more lies, and replace lies with truth.

8. What are some of the beliefs that you have gained since you started the Keys, that you did not used to believe or did not recognize as true?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Most mention that change is possible.
- 3) Jesus loves them, is their Friend, and never leaves them alone.
- 4) They are sinners to whom God offers forgiveness and eternal life.
- 5) Some now realize that the surrendered life is safe.
- 6) Some are now using the tools that are available to help them change, such as memorized Scripture.
- 7) They no longer feel controlled by their lust.
- 8) Some are feeling attracted to the opposite sex, and realize they can commit to one person.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Encourage thanks and praise to God for His awesome deliverance! When a lie is exposed, and truth spoken against it, we become more free (John 8:32 & 36).
- 3) The secular world tries hard to convince people that they were born ssa/ma/tx; but once people realize that change is possible, and they see themselves changing, they want God to continue changing their lives.

- 4) By now most have seen change in their lives, even if they struggle at times. They like the person they see themselves becoming.

9. How did the discoveries you mentioned in #7 and #8 change your behavior, speech, and attitudes towards yourself and others? In what way did you become more obedient to the will of Christ?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many see themselves as less judgmental.
- 3) Many see themselves becoming more helpful and kind to others.
- 4) Many are making better friendships with others, without sex being part of their relationships.
- 5) Many see themselves becoming more obedient to God's will and more Christ-like.
- 6) Some mention that as God changes them, they like themselves better; they are less angry, less preoccupied with sex, and more at peace.
- 7) Many have a more positive attitude towards life.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Affirm even small changes, because they add up to big changes.
- 3) Affirm their efforts to learn to love difficult people.
- 4) As we strive to obey Christ, the devil will try to get us to underestimate ourselves, so he can rob us of joy.

10. Did you notice any blessings of obedience as a result of the changes you mentioned in #9?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Many mention joy, peace, hope for the future, and increased self-esteem.
- 3) Some no longer feel guilty or ashamed, and they can relate better to others.

- 4) Some have been told by others that their changes are noticeable.
- 5) Some are being used by God to help others and are sensing His call on their lives.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Encourage thanks and praise to God for His awesome blessings!

11. 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.

12. 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.

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.
- 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.

Additional points:

- 1) Be aware that the secular world falsely claims that attempting to overcome ssa/ma/tx will result in the person becoming depressed and self-hating. The truth is that a common result of overcoming ssa/ma/tx is becoming less depressed and gaining greater self-esteem, even if they continue to struggle with ssa/ma/tx temptations at times.
- 2) They will probably have some degree of struggle with ssa/ma/tx temptations the rest of their lives. So they need not become discouraged when tempted. As they continue to grow in Christ, they will develop more resistance to temptation. Temptation does not mean they have failed.
- 3) A temptation-free life is an unrealistic expectation that has set up many to become discouraged, give up, and go back to the ssa/ma/tx lifestyle. Ssa/ma/tx overcomers can expect some degree of struggle and prepare themselves for it.
- 4) Research has shown that people who achieve even some degree of change consider it a huge improvement in their lives and feel positive about it.
- 5) Change does not necessarily mean increased opposite-sex attractions. Accepting God's mercy in Christ as a free gift, blocking temptation with memorized Scripture, and feeling glad that they did, is evidence of changed hearts and minds.
- 6) Change does mean that one is no longer defined by one's temptations, the temptations no longer seem significant, and they have lost their power.

- 7) Change also means that one identifies oneself as a pardoned sinner redeemed by Christ, and that one's relationship with Christ is more important than anything the secular world has to offer.
- 8) Encourage them to continue building non-sexual relationships with others of the same sex. Loneliness is the #1 reason people abandon the change effort and go back to the old lifestyle.
- 9) Often the most helpful people are those who have overcome a habitual sin in their own lives. Recovering chemical addicts are often helpful. Heterosexuals who have recovered from pornography or habitual sexual affairs have sometimes become helpful and supportive friends to ssa/ma/tx overcomers.
- 10) If their church is unsupportive, they might prayerfully consider a different church. While many churches are beginning to recognize the need to help ssa/ma/tx strugglers, others are not.
- 11) The Journey to Freedom can be easily adapted to help heterosexuals who struggle with habitual sexual sin. Talking with heterosexuals who struggle to remain sexually pure can be helpful for ssa/ma/tx overcomers. Both groups find that they are not as different as they had thought.