

**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM****UNIT III Key 2                      FAITH**

**SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE:** Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

I Corinthians 16:13

God never allows us to face temptations that are too great for us. However, our self-will does not always want to take the way of escape, and it will fight back when we are under conviction and know that we need to repent. We need to be on the alert, as the verse says. How do we do that? We need to be on the alert for temptations that come from outside of us -- from the environment and other people.

We also need to be on the alert for temptations that come from inside of ourselves. We are more vulnerable to temptations when our thoughts are selfish, self-piteous, envious, cynical, resentful, judgmental, hostile, or prideful. We are more vulnerable to temptations when we are feeling fatigue, fear, anger, shame, humiliation, sadness, loneliness, or low self-esteem, or are recalling painful memories. How are we to resist the thoughts and feelings that lead to temptations before which we feel totally overwhelmed and weak?

Faith is brought to us by the Holy Spirit working through the Word (Romans 10:17); we cannot manufacture it in ourselves by our own efforts. Faith points to the cross and the forgiveness offered through Christ. Faith makes us able to recognize our sin, to realize our need for God's forgiveness, and to believe that Jesus has made full satisfaction on the cross for all of our sins.

Faith is the power that helps us resist when temptation becomes tough and freedom seems impossible. It gives us the courage to face the onslaughts of negative thoughts and emotions and the weakness that results from them. Faith is the power that makes us able to resist temptation for a few more minutes. Faith believes that God's promises are true, and that He will get into the trenches and war on our behalf if asked.

Faith tells us the truth. Faith teaches us to discern the difference between truth and lies. Faith resists the lies that were injected into our minds at a vulnerable age in circumstances of fear, trauma, shame, humiliation, helplessness, pain, and attacks on our self-esteem. Faith in God's truth teaches us discernment. Faith in God's truth gives us power against the lies that have weakened us for so long.

Painful memories reinforce the language of hell. Children are told lies. Children are given mixed messages: told one thing one day, told the opposite hours or days later, are required to agree in each instance, and forbidden to confront the inconsistencies. Children are manipulated, often with guilt and shame, into believing lies. Children are deceived and tricked into ungodly behavior instead of being taught what is right. Authority abuses power in order to meet its own desires rather than using power in order to protect children and teach them right from wrong.

Children are often blamed for the sins of their caregivers, blamed for their emotional reactions to the sins of their caregivers, judged, criticized, belittled, ridiculed, and falsely accused. Reality becomes increasingly distorted as children grow up absorbing lies and then begin living according to the lies. The minds of children are like video cameras that take in everything, and by adolescence their minds are replaying the vast video libraries that have been stored there. Unconsciously, growing adolescents and young adults react to words and phrases that trigger memories that are loaded with meaning specific to each individual. Unless something happens to intervene, they begin to act upon the lies without realizing that they are doing so, unaware of why they are making self-destructive choices.

We easily project onto God the negative thoughts and feelings we had toward our caregivers, especially the ones with whom we had the most trouble. If our caregiver was abusive, we easily imagine God to be abusive; if our caregiver was critical and impossible to please, we imagine God as an angry Judge. But faith shows us a very different view of God. Faith shows us the Shepherd Who comes looking for His lost sheep (Luke 15:4-10), the Father Who welcomes home the son who has sinned (Luke 15:11-24), and the Rabbi Who stood between the adulterous woman and the stones of her accusers (John 8:3-11). Faith must be based on what the Word of God says about Him, not on our own thoughts and feelings about Him.

Feelings can easily lead us astray. We can feel depressed, anxious, angry, or suicidal, or crave mood-altering chemicals. Lies feed these feelings. These feelings tempt us to pursue sin. The lie is that if we sin, we will feel better. If you have gotten this far in the Keys program, you know that sin offers only temporary relief.

When confronted by a painful memory, we can pray a very simple prayer. First, we must confess our own sins so that God will hear us. Confessing our sins helps to clear our minds of deception (Psalm 32:2). Then we can ask the Holy Spirit to show us the lies that we have believed as a result of the painful event. We can ask Him to show us how those lies feed our temptations. When the Holy Spirit exposes a lie from our past, we can bring it before the Lord and ask, “Jesus, is this true?”

If we were falsely accused by an authority figure, we can pray, “Is this true?” If our self-esteem was worn down by criticism, we can pray, “Is this true?” If we were treated like objects to be used for someone’s lust, we can pray, “Is this true?” If we were blamed for the faults of those around us, we can pray, “Is this true?” If we were told that we brought abuse of any kind upon ourselves, we can pray, “Is this true?”

When confronted by a painful memory, look for the lies that lurk in the shadows of our minds. The Holy Spirit is ready with His brilliant and glorious light to expose the lies and show us the truth that sets us free. We are no longer helpless children; we are armed with the Word of God that breaks the power of the lies.

**SCRIPTURE:** Write out what each of these verses or passages mean to you and your situation.

Psalm 91 (Hint: this Psalm is a good prayer to pray for mental protection when one confronts painful memories.)

John 10:10

John 10:14-16

John 20:24-31

I Corinthians 16:13-14

### **STUDY GUIDE**

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

2. Do you, or have you, experienced any of the following:

\_\_\_\_ depression

\_\_\_\_ anxiety

\_\_\_\_ suicidal tendencies

\_\_\_\_ craving for mood-altering chemicals

\_\_\_\_\_ uncontrollable anger

\_\_\_\_\_ other (anything that you sense God is bringing to your mind

3. Are you aware of what lies are feeding those feelings, and if so, what? (Take your time answering, let the Holy Spirit protect you and guide you, and do not try to get ahead of Him. Reach out for prayer from your support group if necessary.)
  
4. What does the Word of God say about the lies (Colossians 2:8)?
  
5. What is the solution to the lies (Colossians 2:3-7)?
  
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?
  
7. What promise is found in Colossians 3:3-4? How do you apply it to your memories of childhood and adolescence?
  
8. What difficulty is described in 2 Corinthians 4:7, and what promise is found?

9. On a scale of 1-10, how victorious have you been lately? Please explain your answer.
  
10. Did you use any memorized Scripture to battle temptation lately? What was the result?
  
11. How is your spiritual life in general, how are you private devotions, and how are things at your church/fellowship group?

Plan of Action (Identifying the specific lies that were injected into our minds at vulnerable times may be lengthy and take years. Perhaps we never truly finish in this lifetime. If you feel the Holy Spirit is leading you to begin, then follow His lead. Facing painful memories and the lies that accompany them is frightening, and to do so, you need to feel safe in the arms of Jesus. Once a lie is identified and the truth from the Word spoken against it, another chain that enslaved us is broken, and we usually feel the joy of liberation.

If you do not feel ready to begin, a later time might be better. Be sure and share any difficulties you encounter with your mentor, confessor, or support system. Many overcomers eventually come to a point in their recovery where they feel a need for solitude and contemplative prayer, during which they deeply open themselves up to God. This stage cannot be forced; you can only be led into it. To undertake this, you will need to be totally honest with God about your sins and deeply into the Word. Please see Psalm 51:6 and 139:23-24 for guidance.)