

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

- 1) Assess progress in forgiveness work.
- 2) Recognize that during moments of trauma, children easily accept distorted beliefs.
- 3) Recognize that when distorted thinking is exposed, we more easily forgive those who wronged us.
- 4) Recognize how our distorted thinking caused us to make bad decisions that caused more hurts.
- 5) Learn to be realistic about the damage that was done to us.
- 6) Learn that our negative emotional states often indicate distorted thinking.
- 7) Learn to speak truth from God's Word against distorted thinking.

Luke 17:3-5**Common responses:**

- 1) Rebuke brothers/sisters who sin, and forgive those who repent.
- 2) We are not to decide who is forgivable and who is not.
- 3) We forgive for our own benefit.
- 4) We more easily forgive people if they repent.
- 5) We are to correct brothers/sisters who are wrong.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) We should only confront and give godly reproof if we do so in love.
- 2) We should only give reproof if we are confessing our own sins.
- 3) Our ability to forgive shows the strength of our faith (verse 5).
- 4) Our only motivation can be to get them back into a right relationship with God; we cannot be motivated by revenge.
- 5) Repentance is the only solution to broken relationships.
- 6) When we confront someone, we should assure them that God forgives the penitent.

- 7) We need to pray for wrong-doers to get saved.
- 8) If the wrong-doers are in the Church, we need to pray for them to surrender more to Christ.
- 9) They may have secret sins that they have not confessed, people whom they have not yet forgiven, or self-will that they have not yet surrendered.
- 10) They may not be aware that they have been hurtful.
- 11) We may find to our surprise that we have hurt them but were not aware of it. Then we need to ask them for forgiveness.
- 12) We need to ask the Holy Spirit to give us the right words.
- 13) Broken relationships never feel good.
- 14) God may have an assignment for us in the lives of those who wronged us.

James 1:20

Common responses:

- 1) Our anger does not help us or anyone else to become righteous.
- 2) Anger results in more anger.
- 3) We need to focus on God's will.
- 4) Anger often tempts us to sin.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Behind anger is often wounded pride; we need to confess our pride as sin.
- 2) Pride blocks us from receiving joy, peace, and other fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).
- 3) God has a plan in every conflicted situation, and we need to cooperate with it.
- 4) We need to pray for God's will in conflicted situations.
- 5) Intercessory prayer is more effective than anger.
- 6) Often ssa/ma/tx overcomers were held in low regard by their families. Sometimes as an overcomer grows in Christ, he/she gains respect, and other family members might come to him/her for spiritual advice.
- 7) God does not promise to bless our anger. He will bless our obedience (Hebrews 6:10) and our intercessory prayer (James 5:16).

Colossian 3:12-15**Common responses:**

- 1) Let in God's love, and forgive people like God forgave us.
- 2) As we give forgiveness, we become more kind and humble.
- 3) We should not expect people to earn our forgiveness.
- 4) Many list the virtues that they realize that they need to develop.
- 5) This passage often triggers self-examination.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) These verses describe Jesus' love, not ours.
- 2) We forgive when we become willing to love those who wronged us.
- 3) If others are hostile toward us, but we are kind and patient with them, we can feel joy and peace because we reacted like Jesus would.
- 4) Our assignment is to bring the knowledge of God's mercy to those who wronged us, by our words and deeds, or through prayer.
- 5) These are good verses to use to examine ourselves and confess sin, along with I Corinthians 13, Galatians 5:22-23, and I Thessalonians 5:16-22.
- 6) We should pray every day to develop these virtues.

Mark 5:1-19**Common responses:**

- 1) We should never assume anyone is beyond the reach of God's mercy.
- 2) Jesus is stronger than demons.
- 3) We need to love and forgive everyone, not just respectable people.
- 4) We rid ourselves of sin when we worship Jesus and ask Him for help.
- 5) No matter how bad someone has been, God can transform him/her.
- 6) Once you make an attempt to forgive, God steps in to help.
- 7) God will have mercy on anyone, so we should have mercy on anyone.
- 8) We are to testify to what Jesus has done on our behalf.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Demonized people often come from very painful backgrounds. Terrible things might have happened to this man from the time he was very young. His people were hostile and rejecting.
- 2) He lived a life of continuous torment. His people did not know how to help him and maybe did not want to.
- 3) His people seemed more concerned with material possessions, such as the herd of swine, than the spiritual condition of the possessed man or themselves.
- 4) Possibly other little children were also treated badly in that community and thereby set up for a future of demonic infestations.
- 5) The encounter with Jesus changed everything for this man. Jesus wants to deliver us from mental torment and bring us peace.
- 6) Note that at first only the demons spoke to Jesus; the human host was unable to speak. His body language said what was necessary. Jesus never failed to hear a plea for mercy (Luke 23:42-43).
- 7) This man wanted to stay with Jesus and fill his mind with Jesus' teachings. Instead, Jesus sent him back to the community where he had been hated and feared, in order to bring them the Gospel.
- 8) The whole community needed deliverance, not just one man, and perhaps it was ready for it.
- 9) Jesus' forgiveness sometimes leads us to bring the Gospel to those who wronged us the most, or to those whom we have wronged.
- 10) To do so, that man would have to forgive the community that had wronged him, and he might have had to seek forgiveness from those whom he had assaulted.

1. On a scale of 1-10, how forgiving are you at this point?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) By now, numbers are usually high.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) High numbers usually mean they have come a long way. Encourage thanks and praise to God.
- 2) Avoid criticizing low numbers or descriptions of struggling.
- 3) Empathize with their pain.
- 4) Forgiveness involves dying to self (I Corinthians 15:31, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, & Galatians 2:20).
- 5) Reassure them that as they struggle to forgive, the Holy Spirit will guide them through the necessary work, which will be unique to each individual.
- 6) Keep their focus on Jesus, Who was hurt, helpless, and humiliated on our behalf.
- 7) Explain that the devil used their painful experiences as opportunities to inject lies into their minds when they were vulnerable children.
- 8) To forgive, we need to identify the lies and speak truth against them. Then we can more easily forgive the ones who brought the lies to us.
- 9) Encourage them to grieve in the presence of Jesus, Who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4-5).
- 10) Encourage them to keep praying for the salvation of those who wronged them.

2. Does this represent an improvement since you began the Keys?

Common responses:

- 1) Most say 'yes'.
- 2) Some have noticed that they are much less angry.
- 3) Some feel more remorse about how they have hurt others.
- 4) Some have begun to trust God to handle those who wronged them.
- 5) Some say that they need to continue to improve.
- 6) A few have sought forgiveness from others, did not receive it, and feel very hurt by this rejection.
- 7) While many do not actually say so, they seem to like themselves better since they became more forgiving.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Encourage thanks and praise to God for any progress.

- 2) Be aware that many come from backgrounds of abuse and rejection. Giving forgiveness was hard.
- 3) Remind them that forgiveness, like love, is an action verb. If they are kind, gentle, and patient with those who wronged them; avoid fantasies of revenge, confrontation, or vindictiveness; and pray for the salvation of those people; they can celebrate with Jesus because they are doing right.
- 4) Acknowledge the progress they have made. You can ask them if they are feeling better about themselves now that they have forgiven more.
- 5) Sometimes we have trouble forgiving others because we do not really believe Romans 12:19-21.
- 6) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

3. What are some of the things that you have been able to forgive others for?

Common responses:

- 1) Answers often include childhood sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal abuse, being bullied, being abandoned, being humiliated in various ways, etc.
- 2) The people on the list usually include parents, parent substitutes, other authority figures, other family members, peers, molesters, former partners, etc.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Commend any forgiveness they have given and any insights they have gained.
- 2) Acknowledge how hard true forgiveness is; it seldom comes easily.
- 3) Assure them that God will bless them as they struggle to forgive.
- 4) Many were humiliated in various ways. Humiliation is one of the most painful emotions to overcome.
- 5) Humiliation becomes easier to overcome when the lies behind it are exposed.
- 6) Facing our pain without our usual defenses is a powerful experience.
- 7) We can forgive even though we continue to feel anger, because what they did was wrong. What matters is what we do with the anger (Ephesians 4:26).
- 8) Encourage them to continue to pray for the salvation of their abusers.

- 9) Reassure them that in this life, our love will never be perfect (I Corinthians 13:12 & I John 3:2); therefore, our forgiveness will never be perfect.

4. What are some of the things you have not yet been able to forgive others for?

Common responses:

- 1) Some do not immediately forgive people who treat them badly, but eventually are able to do so.
- 2) Experiences that were humiliating are the hardest to forgive.
- 3) Some still hope to reconcile with family members.
- 4) Some have forgiven everyone.
- 5) Some are in situations where they are still being treated badly.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) If a hostile situation occurs, encourage them to de-brief the situation in prayer as soon as possible.
- 2) We can ask God to show us how to handle others' hostility.
- 3) We can ask God to show us if our actions or speech trigger negative reactions in others.
- 4) Pain forces us to face our memories, identify the lies, and look for the truth, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.
- 5) Sometimes our pain does not stop because there are more lies in our minds that the Holy Spirit has not yet exposed. We can ask Him to show us if there are more lies behind the painful memories.
- 6) We can forgive others and still feel pain when we remember what they did. The devil's lie is that the pain means they have not truly forgiven. The truth is that broken relationships are painful by their very nature.
- 7) To forgive, we need to accept the pain. Pain might be a cross we will have to carry until the other person repents and is ready to reconcile (Luke 9:23 & 14:27).
- 8) Assure them that Romans 8:28, Jeremiah 29:11, and Joel 2:25 always apply.
- 9) Encourage them to keep praying for the salvation of those who wronged them. Such a prayer pleases God (Matthew 5:44-46 & Romans 12:17-19).

- 10) Jesus on the cross became the wrongs that were done to them (2 Corinthians 5:21).

5. Do you sometimes blame others for sins that are actually your responsibility? Please explain your answer.

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.
- 2) Some realize that they excuse their bad choices by blaming others.
- 3) Some start blaming others but realize what they are doing and accept responsibility for their choices.
- 4) Some used to blame others but have learned to stop.
- 5) Some are still struggling to clarify what parts of conflicted relationships are their responsibility and what parts are the responsibility of others.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Commend any insights. Only the Holy Spirit through the Word can convict us of sin.
- 2) Never criticize their confession. Honesty is a sign of greater maturity. Refer them to I John 1:9 and Romans 8:1 if necessary.
- 3) Encourage them to pray about confusing situations.
- 4) Encourage them to ask the Holy Spirit to show them which lies are in their own minds and which lies are coming from their environments.
- 5) The more we discern the lies in our own minds and speak the truth against them, the less other people can trigger us.
- 6) We cannot blame our environments, but we do need to realize what can trigger us.
- 7) We often become angry because we feel helpless. Instead of feeling helpless, we can ask God how He wants us to handle the situation or person.
- 8) Whenever we sin, we open a door to trouble. Sometimes when trouble happens, we forget that we left our doors open.

6. Do you sometimes blame yourself for sins that are actually the responsibility of the other person? Please explain your answer.

Common responses:

- 1) Some do not.
- 2) Some say that they used to.
- 3) Many grew up in families where they felt that they had to take responsibility for everyone around them.
- 4) Many had unhappy parents who blamed their children for their unhappiness.
- 5) Many were abused, and the abusers told them that the abuse was the children's fault.
- 6) Many sexual abuse victims blame themselves. They tell themselves that they should have fought harder, avoided the abuser more carefully, tried harder to escape, or told someone.
- 7) If the child experienced the sexual abuse as pleasurable (more often in males), the child might then blame himself.
- 8) If memories of the sexual abuse recur in sexual fantasies and erotic dreams, the victim continues to blame himself and feels intense shame. Victim-blaming is a lie of the devil that can lead to suicidal thoughts.
- 9) Some realize that they are still blaming themselves.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) We should be the best influence possible on everyone around us.
- 2) However, we cannot blame ourselves for their choices. That kind of self-blame is distorted thinking and can rob us of joy.
- 3) If someone treats us badly, and we respond with kindness, we can experience the joy of the Lord. We need not blame ourselves for their on-going hostility.
- 4) Innocent parties should not be blamed for others' aggression against them.
- 5) Children are never responsible for having been sexually abused, even if the abuse recurs in sexual fantasies or erotic dreams. By now they know how to block sexual fantasies with memorized Scripture and the Emergency Prayer and to fall asleep quoting Scripture in order to reduce the likelihood of erotic dreams.

- 6) When we realize that we are not to blame for someone else's hostility toward us, we feel more free.
- 7) We should only give godly reproof to others if we are mature enough to accept it ourselves.

7. Have you been able to pray that those who wronged you would repent and receive God's forgiveness?

Common responses:

- 1) Most say 'yes', and many have experienced blessings as a result.
- 2) The few who have not yet done so usually realize that they need to start.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Commend any praying that they have done for those who wronged them.
- 2) Never criticize anyone for saying 'no'. They may not be ready yet. Let the Holy Spirit continue to work on them through the Word.
- 3) Assure them that God will bless such a prayer, because it costs them something to pray it.
- 4) Praying for the ones who wronged us often helps us to overcome our feelings of helplessness.
- 5) We gain spiritual power when we pray for them, whether they repent or not.

8. Do you really accept Romans 12:19?

Common responses:

- 1) Most say 'yes'.
- 2) Some acknowledge that while they accept it in theory, they find it hard to do.
- 3) Some add comments that explain the difficulties they have had with it.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) Commend any progress they have made. Most would not have been able to accept this before they began the program.
- 2) Never criticize any difficulties that they confess.

- 3) You may need to review the material on forgiveness with them.
- 4) Assure them that God has a better plan for dealing with those who wronged them.
- 5) God will make some good come from the pain they have experienced (Romans 8:28).
- 6) Assure them that as they put this verse into practice, they might have an opportunity to observe God dealing with difficult people His way.
- 7) When that happens, they should pray for the person with whom God is dealing.
- 8) When God truly humbles someone, He rarely seems to do so in front of an audience. The experience is usually a private matter between the sinner and God.

9. Have you become aware of some of the lies that you have believed, and if so, have you found Scriptures that speak against them? How did that make you feel? Please share to the extent you feel comfortable.

Common responses:

- 1) Answers will vary.

Points to emphasize:

- 1) 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) Sometimes new insights stir up old issues, and they are more vulnerable while they think them through. They may be more victorious than they realize, even if they do not feel victorious.

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.

11. 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.

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.
- 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) Sometimes we are tested, and we fail.
- 2) The test may have been an unusual temptation or an old one in a different form.
- 3) The test may have come through someone who said or did something that challenged our faith.

- 4) The test may have been an opportunity to do a good deed or to witness, but we did not do it.
- 5) First, we need to confess our failure and de-brief the incident with the Holy Spirit.
- 6) On-going guilt and shame over our failure are unproductive.
- 7) However, awareness of our weaknesses should keep us humble.
- 8) Sometimes we get another chance. A similar temptation, challenge, or opportunity is presented to us again at a later time.
- 9) We are not given another chance in order to earn God's favor, but to experience His mercy.
- 10) In His mercy, He gives us a chance to response rightly next time.
- 11) Such opportunities help to train us in righteousness, sharpen our use of our gifts, and lead us into our callings.
- 12) Tests, temptations, challenges, and opportunities are put in our lives so that we can learn what God wants to teach us.