

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM**UNIT III Key 5 LOVE**

SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE: Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Love challenges us to change, and love creates its own compulsions. It changes how we relate to God, ourselves, and other people, and how we view our lives. It compels us to do inconvenient and unpleasant things as acts of love towards others. It compels us to accept responsibilities that we would rather not carry out. It compels us to avoid actions that would be harmful to others. Love changes our self-will.

Jesus' love is the perfect example. He stayed on the cross to pay for our sins out of love, not because He had to or because the nails could keep Him there. He stayed there to save people who were hostile, rejecting, and hard-hearted (Luke 23:34-37 & Romans 5:8 & 10). He lay down His life for both friends and enemies.

If He thereby showed His love, how do we show ours? We say that we love God, and the measure of the love we have for God is shown in how much we love each other. We are seldom called to lay down our lives for others. Our love is usually tested in other ways.

For example, your love is tested every time someone wants to be sexual with you. Do you love that person enough to refuse? The lie of the world, the flesh, and the devil is that if you both consent to it, the sexual act is okay. But the truth from God's Word tells us that if we really love someone, we will refuse to join them in sin, even if they beg, plead, and pester us for it.

Every test is an opportunity to confront a lie with the truth. Our sinful human nature accepts the devil's lies and finds God's truth hard to believe. We almost feel as if we are unloving when we refuse a sexual encounter with an attractive person who looks

disappointed at our refusal. And yet refusing to join that person in a sinful act is actually an act of love on our part.

What do other ssa/ma/tx people really need? They do not need to continue in a life of sin. They need to be loved for some traits other than their sex appeal. Some have spent their whole lives trading their bodies for a little love. Sex may be their only way of feeling wanted. What they need most is to receive Jesus' love (I John 4:10 & 19).

Maybe you once used sex to get some love, but now you know better. You know the love of Jesus. You know that love sacrifices and gives. You know that love does not seek its own advantage (I Corinthians 13:5). Love wants to show others the more excellent way (I Corinthians 12:31, which introduces chapter 13). Real love wants to show the love of Jesus to attract others to His love.

Real love sometimes has to say 'no'. Real love sometimes tells people what they do not want to hear. A loving parent sometimes must say 'no' to a child and set limits the child would prefer not to accept. A loving spouse must sometimes accept 'no' from a wife or husband. A common belief these days is that if someone really loves you, that person will always give you your way. Unfortunately, in many marriages both the husband and wife believe this to be true, a belief that naturally leads to conflict or even divorce.

Real love looks for opportunities to live out the love of Jesus and speak of His Grace whenever possible. Real love tells the person who tries to seduce you that there is a better way to live, that real love is possible, and that your refusal is an act of love, not rejection.

Our love is also tested when others have wronged us. Human nature wants to take the role of prosecutor, throw the hammer of God's Law at them, and make sure that we show them that what they did was wrong. But the Holy Spirit working through the Word is the One Who convicts people of sin; we step out of place when we try to convict others of sin, and God usually does not offer us much help when we try to do so. Usually we are motivated by anger, not love. The most loving thing we can do is to pray for them and

look for opportunities to speak of God's Grace to them, and the Holy Spirit is far more willing to help us do so if He is asked.

Our love is tested when we must tell the truth, even when telling lies would be to our advantage. Our love is tested when we recognize our need to go to another and acknowledge to them that we were the ones who were wrong. Our love is tested when we have chances to be helpful and kind to those who seem totally unlovable.

Our love will be tested because God loves us, and He disciplines the ones whom He loves (Hebrews 12:5-11). He will not just stand back and observe how well we handle the test; He will fight for us if asked. Our love will be tested so that we can become more loving, and in the midst of our tests, we will have opportunities to learn more of Jesus' love.

SCRIPTURE

John 15:13

Romans 5:7-8

Matthew 5:44-48

Luke 10:29-37

STUDY GUIDE

1. Have you ever had a loving, non-sexual friendship with someone of the same sex? Do you believe a non-sexual friendship is possible?

2. Have you ever had a genuinely loving relationship with a same-sex partner? If so, would the love have been available if the sex had not been available?

3. What are some situations in which your love has been tested? How did you handle those situations?

4. On a scale of 1-10, how well are you loving people in general? Please explain your answer.

5. On a scale of 1-10, how well are you loving those who wronged you? Please explain your answer.

6. Have you had any opportunities to do good to those who hate you (Romans 12:20-21)? Are you praying for their salvation? Please share any examples, whether or not they appeared effective.

7. What is the point of Jesus' conversation with Peter in John 21:15-19? You might want to read over John 18:15-18 and 25-27 before answering.

8. On a scale of 1-10, how victorious have you been lately? Please explain your answer.

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

10. How is your spiritual life in general, how are your private devotions, and how are things at your church/fellowship group?

Plan of Action: