

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

- 1) Understand forgiveness in the context of eternal life with Jesus.
- 2) Become aware that living transparently before God is a way of life, not just a way to overcome sin/ma/tx.
- 3) Understand that they may have wronged others and therefore need to seek forgiveness.
- 4) Learn to not accept the accusations of the devil.
- 5) Keep their focus on Jesus, Who will walk alongside them for the rest of their lives.
- 6) Overcome shame.

Hebrews 12:2-3**Common responses:**

- 1) We need to focus on Jesus during both good times and bad.
- 2) We forgive others more easily when we focus on Jesus.
- 3) When we focus on Jesus' suffering, we will be less concerned about our own hurts.
- 4) We forgive others more easily when we remember that we will spend eternity with Him.
- 5) When we focus on Jesus, we will focus less on worldly things.
- 6) He resisted the devil, so we can also.
- 7) Forgiveness should be followed by reconciliation, if possible.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) When we are victims of others' cruelty, we feel hurt, helpless, and humiliated.
- 2) Of all human emotions, humiliation seems the hardest to get over. Humiliation leaves a stain on our souls.
- 3) We feel shame because of the abuse that happened to us.
- 4) On the cross, Jesus endured others' hostility, but He despised the shame.

- 5) He was tortured to death while hanging naked near a well-traveled public road, He was taunted by the people who hated him, and His few clothes were gambled over by hardened soldiers. Anyone else would have felt shame.
- 6) He refused to accept the shame, so we can also refuse to accept the shame.
- 7) We do not have to believe the lies of the devil that keep us feeling shame.
- 8) Jesus wants to replace the lies of the devil with the truth from His Word (John 8:32-36).
- 9) When we do not accept the shame, we more easily forgive those who wronged us.
- 10) As pardoned sinners, we become the righteousness of God in Christ (II Corinthians 5:21).
- 11) Jesus focused on the joy set before Him; His joy would be seeing us receiving saving faith (Isaiah 53:11).
- 12) We can also focus on the joy of working for others to receive saving faith.
- 13) When tempted to sin, we can focus on Jesus on the cross, Who endured hostility from sinners.
- 14) Forgiving us cost Jesus something, and forgiving others might cost us also.
- 15) We forgive others for God's glory.
- 16) The blessings of forgiveness are to be spread to others.
- 17) The more we forgive others, the more humble we become, and the more God can entrust us with vulnerable souls, an expanded calling, and greater gifts.

#### Romans 8:18

#### **Common responses:**

- 1) All the bad things in this life will come to an end.
- 2) We need to focus on eternity.
- 3) Our sufferings are small compared to the glory of eternity with Jesus.
- 4) This verse is in a context of our position in Christ as pardoned sinners.
- 5) The context also tells us that we will suffer.

#### **Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) This is a good verse to memorize for when life becomes difficult and we need encouragement.

- 3) We focus on what God wants us to do in our lives now, and we also focus on eternity.
- 4) People who are most focused on eternity do the most to serve God and others in this life.
- 5) Our blessings are meant to be spread to others.
- 6) True forgiveness will involve suffering, because our sinful nature gives up the pleasures of revenge or vengeful fantasies. Refer to I Corinthians 15:19.

#### Romans 8:31-34

##### **Common responses:**

- 1) God does not give up on us.
- 2) Circumstances cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ.
- 3) There is no condemnation; we are pardoned sinners.
- 4) God will not judge us for our former sins.
- 5) We should not judge others by refusing to forgive them.

##### **Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Paul wrote this during a time of persecution against the Church.
- 3) This is a good passage for when we need encouragement.

#### Romans 8:35-39

##### **Common responses:**

- 1) If we are in God's will, we can overcome anything.
- 2) We do not want to give up such glorious promises.
- 3) These verses express the result of God's forgiveness toward us, so we are willing to forgive others.
- 4) We can defeat the enemy of our souls.

##### **Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) This is a good passage for when we need encouragement.

- 3) We can quote these verses when the devil tries to shame us by reminding us of our former sins.
- 4) These verses reflect the way God sees our circumstances, not how we sometimes see them.
- 5) We sometimes see ourselves as worthless and unlovable, but God sees us as “more than conquerors”.
- 6) The truth of these verse should help us forgive those who made us feel worthless and unlovable.
- 7) No fear, pain, trauma, shame, humiliation, low self-esteem, painful memories, or lies of the devil can conquer us if we are in Christ.

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

**Common responses:**

- 1) Numbers are usually high at this point.
- 2) They have learned to give their pain to Jesus.
- 3) Many have learned to focus on the next life rather than the hurts in this one.
- 4) Some state that they have been forgiven much and are therefore able to forgive others.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word to guide their thinking as they struggle to forgive others.
- 2) Encourage thanks and praise to God.
- 3) Never criticize any difficulties that they confess. Give encouragement; forgiveness is difficult. Many of them come from backgrounds of severe abuse.
- 4) Encourage them to pray for the salvation of those who have wronged them.
- 5) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

2. On a scale of 1-10, how much have you improved in your ability to forgive others? Please explain your answer.

**Common responses:**

- 1) Numbers are usually high at this point.
- 2) Some never thought of forgiving others until they accepted Jesus as their Savior and read the Bible.
- 3) Keeping their focus on Jesus has helped them to forgive.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm their progress. None of it was easy.
- 2) Encourage thanks and praise to God for the mighty work He has done in their lives.
- 3) Encourage them to keep using what they have learned from the Word as they deal with hurts from the past and also the future.

**3. How does keeping your focus on Jesus' death on the cross help you to forgive?****Common responses:**

- 1) Jesus suffered more than we ever will, but He forgave those who hated Him.
- 2) His death was sacrificial, so we need to be willing to forgive those who hate us.
- 3) We want to be like Jesus.
- 4) He will take us to Heaven someday, and nothing hurtful from this life is going to matter anymore.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Refer to I Corinthians 15, which summarizes Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil.
- 3) Jesus shed His blood for the sins of those who wronged us as well as for our sins.
- 4) Jesus wants to forgive those who wronged us; they just need to repent.

**4. How does keeping your focus on your future in Heaven help you to forgive?****Common responses:**

- 1) The troubles of this life do not compare to an eternity of joy.
- 2) None of our present troubles are permanent.
- 3) We will be rewarded for patiently enduring suffering and injustice on this earth.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Be aware that some might still view forgiveness as a Law that they must obey in order to earn salvation. Forgiveness is a mercy to be received, not a Law that will condemn us.
- 3) Forgiving others means we repent of our grudges, thereby giving forgiveness as we receive it.
- 4) Forgiving others means we are willing to love them.
- 5) Forgiving others means praying for them to be saved so they can live in Heaven with us.
- 6) If they still have a legalistic view of forgiveness, suggest they review the material from the previous Keys on Forgiveness.
- 7) In Heaven, we will finally learn how to love others the right way (I John 3:2).
- 8) We will be rewarded for patiently enduring others' hostility and praying for their salvation.

5. Is there anyone whom you would like to see go to Hell (other than the devil and his angels)? If your answer is "yes", please explain.

**Common responses:**

- 1) No one has said "yes".
- 2) Some used to want others to go to Hell, but repented of that attitude when they accepted Jesus as their Savior or as they grew in their faith.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm that we do the Lord's work to help prevent others from going to Hell.
- 2) Refusing to forgive someone is similar to wishing they would go to Hell.
- 3) Encourage them to keep praying for the salvation of those who have wronged them.
- 4) Sometimes people wrong us because their consciences are tormenting them about their sins. Rather than repent, they continue to attack us. They hope to provoke us to anger in order to silence their consciences.
- 5) Refer to Matthew 5:11 and Romans 12:19-20. Sometimes when we heap burning coals on the heads of others, they become even more hostile.

6. Think of those who have wronged you. What can you do to prevent them from going to Hell?**Common responses:**

- 1) Look for opportunities to speak the truth in love.
- 2) Pray for them to accept Jesus as their Savior.
- 3) Look for ways to speak and show love, which shows forgiveness.
- 4) Repent for having judged them.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Give encouragement. None of this is easy.
- 2) Remind them that they might be the only ones praying for those who wronged them.
- 3) God may have allowed those people into their lives so they will pray for them. Refer to James 5:16b.
- 4) The more we forgive others, the more God can entrust us with open doors of service.
- 5) Encourage them to assume that every time they pray for someone's salvation, the Holy Spirit is putting another crack in a hardened heart.
- 6) When we recall painful memories, those can remind us to pray for those who wronged us.

7. Please read Numbers 12. In verse 13, what is Moses' response when God punishes Miriam?**Common responses:**

- 1) He immediately prays an intercessory prayer on her behalf.
- 2) He shows Christ-like love.
- 3) He shows no joy when God punishes her.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.
- 2) Miriam has insulted Moses' wife, but Moses is very forgiving.
- 3) Like Jesus, Moses prays for the one who wronged him (Luke 23:34).
- 4) This chapter confronts racism. Miriam thought she was better than Moses' wife, because his wife was of a darker race.
- 5) God punished Miriam's racism by making her skin snow-white for a week.
- 6) She was banished from the camp for a week and probably learned humility.

- 7) God obviously does not object to cross-racial marriages. We are all created from one blood (Acts 17:26).
- 8) We should be pleading with God on behalf of sinners, like Abraham pleaded with God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18).

8. Have you ever put Luke 6:27-28 into practice? What was the result?

**Common responses:**

- 1) Sometimes relationships improve.
- 2) Sometimes other people become more hostile.
- 3) Most state that they feel more at peace when they pray for their enemies.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response. None of this is easy.
- 2) When we put these verses into practice, we gain victory over the situation. Refer to Romans 8:37.
- 3) The devil will lie and tell us that we are losing when we are actually winning.
- 4) If we pray for our enemies and they go to Heaven as a result of our prayers, someday they will thank us (Revelations 14:13b).
- 5) When we pray for our enemies, we can celebrate with Jesus because we obeyed His will.
- 6) Refer to Matthew 5:10, Hebrews 6:10, and I Peter 4:14-16.

9. Some people are going to be hostile to us no matter how hard we try to be good to them. The devil might try to convince us that their hostility is somehow our fault. What does Luke 6:22-23 say about that?

**Common responses:**

- 1) We are being blessed and can be joyful.
- 2) We can expect some persecution.
- 3) We will be rewarded someday in Heaven if we return love for hate.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm any Biblical response.



- 2) Anyone who has gotten this far in the Keys program has had a lot of experience fighting temptation or even direct demonic attacks.
- 3) So they may be undergoing a different kind of attack: the attack of persecution by people who are feeling guilty because they see the overcomer living a better life, which aggravates their guilt and offends their pride.
- 4) Some people are just committed to their negativity.
- 5) Some people are only comfortable with their sins if they can surround themselves with others who affirm their sins; when someone does not affirm their sins, they feel offended (I Peter 4:3-4).
- 6) If we achieve nothing else, we bring Jesus joy.

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

**Common responses:**

- 1) Most have seen positive results.
- 2) By this time, going to Scripture and prayer has become an automatic reflex.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Affirm the power of the Word to block temptation.
- 2) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.

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) Most report that things are going well.
- 2) Some are going through personal struggles or seeing problems at church.
- 3) Sometimes they see problems at church because they have become more discerning of bad doctrines.

**Points to emphasize:**

- 1) Encourage thanks and praise to God for whatever is going well.

- 2) Never criticize any difficulties that they confess.
- 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) Counsel based on your knowledge, experience, and what you have learned from working with this person.
- 3) Give lots of encouragement for any valid ideas on how to make changes.
- 4) Encourage confessing sin and receiving forgiveness where they identify a need to make changes.

#### **Additional points:**

- 1) The pastor of a church has a unique role.
- 2) Part of his role is to serve as a confessor and to speak the absolution.
- 3) When we struggle with a besetting sin, we should be able to go to our pastor and confess our sins privately.
- 4) He is called to point us to the cross and the Ransom paid on our behalf.
- 5) He is called to declare to us the entire forgiveness of all of our sins.
- 6) The pastor does not forgive sins, but the words of forgiveness that he speaks to us come from God Himself.
- 7) Seeking private confession confronts our pride. In our pride, we prefer to keep our sins and temptations secret. Privately confessing to our pastors should be a safe way to confront our pride under the covering of God's mercy in Christ.
- 8) Hearing the assurance of God's forgiveness from the pastor, who speaks the words from God Himself, helps diminish our shame over our secret sins and temptations.
- 9) Pride and shame are closely linked, and both can be dealt with when sins are privately confessed.