

# **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM**

## **UNIT V Key 2                      FAITH**

**SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE:** If you will not believe, you surely shall not last. Isaiah 7:9b

**READ:** “What Do You Really Believe About Jesus?” and “The Ultimate Friend” (at the end of this Key).

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

Psalm 34:1-7

Psalm 34:8-14

Psalm 34:15-22

Isaiah 8:19

I Timothy 4:1

Psalm 18:1-10

**STUDY GUIDE** (Feel free to write on the backside or use additional paper if necessary.)

1. Have you ever had any involvement with the occult? Include involvement with Ouija boards, Tarot cards, fortune-tellers, séances, New Age, Wicca, or Satanism. If so, what was the result?

2. If you answered 'yes' to any of the above, have you discarded any paraphernalia associated with it? Have you repented of it and renounced it? (Caution: if bringing up these issues triggers a negative reaction, go **immediately** into prayer for protection before continuing. If you need help, contact your pastor or a trusted prayer partner.)

3. How has your faith changed since you began the program?

4. Why does faith have to be in Christ **alone**? What happens when we have only partial faith in Christ but place part of our faith in the things of this world?

5. What are some compromises you have tried to make between what the Bible says and what the World says? What was the result?

6. Is there anything in your life that you find hard to trust to God alone? Please describe.

7. What are some incidents in the last month, last few months, or last year, in which you felt your faith was tested? Please describe.

8. What are some of the Scriptures that you used to get through them?

9. What does Isaiah 54:17 say to you?

10. Check which best describes the use you make of your faith during temptation:

\_\_\_\_\_ use it on occasion

\_\_\_\_\_ use it about half the time

\_\_\_\_\_ use it more often than not

\_\_\_\_\_ use it most of the time

\_\_\_\_\_ use it consistently, it has become an automatic reflex

Does this represent an improvement since you began the program? Please describe.

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

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

Plan of Action: (If you answered 'yes' to Study Guide #1, your plan needs to include purging your life of anything involving the occult. If any demonic manifestations occur in your life, you need only rebuke and renounce them in the name of Jesus, and confess any sins that may have given them an opening. If you need help, contact your pastor or a trusted prayer partner.)

## WHAT DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS?

Because He is the Son of God, and our Creator, Jesus understands us perfectly. He can relate to the power of temptation. He knows how hard it is to fight against any sin alone. He understands the hurt that can come to someone who resists sin. He understands how easy it is to hate and what it can do to us. He knows how easy it is to take the wrong way in solving our problems or releasing our tensions. He knows our need to be loved. He knows, because He created us, and also became a true human being.

There is only one difference between Him and us – He never gave in to temptation or hate or took the easy way out. He gave love but never tried to buy it with sex. And because He understands, He is always ready to forgive us when we fail, and is willing to help us so that we don't fail or fall.

Jesus was fully human. He fully understands humans. He still loves all humans. He has a very special love for those who were given to Him by the Father. He is even willing to go to bat for us with the Father when we fall short of the holiness that the love of God demands of us. Jesus never gloats and says, "I told you so." He only says, "You are forgiven. Go and sin no more."

He does this all because He is our true Friend. "A friend in need is a friend indeed". Real friends don't require sexual favors to be friends. We are in need, and Jesus is a Friend to sinners in need.

More good things could be said about Jesus. These truths are good starters.

How do you answer the question Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)"

By Rev. Rodel Eberle  
Keys Founding Director

## THE ULTIMATE FRIEND

BY ED HURST

It seems that everyone I know who struggle with homosexuality is searching for a friend. Although we all have a variety of friends and acquaintances, the one we yearn for is “special”, “deeper”, “more intimate” (in the non-sexual sense) than our regular friends. Many, like myself, even have stricter categories of relationships. Level 1 is “strictly acquaintance”; Level 2 is “meaningful small talk”; Level 3 is “limited personal and/or emotional disclosure”; and Level 4 is “total disclosure”. As we learn to trust our potential friend’s personal integrity and their love and acceptance of us, we move from “acquaintance” to “deeper friendship”.

We long for a friend who understands and accepts us, a friend who won’t reject us even when they learn our darkest secrets, a friend who will comfort and sometimes confront. We desire a friend who believes in us and trusts us. Most often, we want a friendship that involves “give and take”. We want them to share *their* burdens with us, too.

In our search for “the ultimate friend”, we are often short-sighted. Most of us carry preconceived notions of what we expect. We look for Level 4 qualities before we’ve even moved beyond Level 1. We forget that relationships don’t just happen; they *grow*. Frequently in our search for our “dream friend”, we pass up quality potential friendships without realizing it. We lament our friendlessness while a willing, capable, quality friend looks on, wondering what it takes to get our attention.

While some might say that this has never been the case for them, my counseling experience relates that most of us have done this in the past and many of us still do it today. One willing friend who stands waiting in the wings is Jesus.

As our Creator, He understands us. As our Redeemer, He accepts us. As our Righteousness, He atones for our darkest secrets. As our Counselor, He comforts and

confronts. He believes in us even when we don't believe in ourselves, and He trusts us to bring forth fruit. He even shares His burdens with us, for the lost, for fellow Christians in need, and for our own growth in Him. Level 4 disclosure ought to be easy with Him, since He knows our innermost thoughts anyway.

Why do we neglect His friendship? Is it because we still carry a mental image of a club-wielding God? Is it because we cannot audibly hear His voice and physically feel His touch? Is it because we've gotten so distracted by our search for a human friend? Have we lost sight of the *person* of Jesus because of our contacts with the organized Church? Has religion gotten in the way of our relationship with Him?

Who is Jesus to you? Is He simply "God's Son"? Is He only "the One Who started the Church?" Is He merely the central character in a very old, very sad story? That isn't enough! Even the demons know all that. The difference for us is *the indwelling Christ*...Christ in *us*, the hope of glory. He is our Creator, Redeemer, King, and Judge. He's our Priest, our Messiah, our Lord, *and* our Friend, our Friend Who lives *within* us! Our Friend Who will *never* leave us! Certainly He deserves to be our *Ultimate Friend*.

Yes, there still remains a conflict between the truth that "He deserves to be our Ultimate Friend" and the fact that for many of us, He is not. How can we effectively and realistically resolve this conflict? I believe that we need to get back to the realization that this is a relationship and that relationships don't just happen, they *grow*. While it is true that we were united with Christ when we accepted Him as our Lord and Savior, it is also true that we need to mature both in our faith and in our relationship with Him. There are some practical ways to accomplish this.

TRUST: For most of us, trust does not come easily; in our relationships with friends, we are extremely careful in the way that we allow trust to build. Frequently, we "test" a potential friend on the attitudes, their abilities, and their acceptance of us. To some degree, we might do this with Jesus as well. We often discover through trial and error that He *is* exactly Who He says He is and that He will *do* what He says He will *do*. I often

encourage those who have a trust problem to spend several weeks reading nothing but John 14-17. Those chapters express the heart of Jesus so well and also reflect the love of God and the role of the Holy Spirit. For me, they make the intangible (spiritual) nature of God so much more tangible.

Many express that they have extreme difficulties trusting in someone they cannot see, touch, or hear. It helps to realize that God has ordained people to be His present day representatives. Do you *see* Jesus in your pastor or in a Christian friend? Do you *feel* His comforting touch in the hug of a fellow believer? Do you *hear* His voice through a pastor, teacher, counselor, or friend? Remind yourself that it *isn't* the person, that it's *Christ in them* that you are experiencing.

PRAYER: When I consider that it's a relationship I'm building, I dislike the word "prayer". It seems to convey both formality and duty. Yet it's difficult to imagine a relationship where *conversation and communication* don't play a vital role. I try to talk to Jesus as a friend. It's not unusual for me to say, "Wow, did You see that?" as I'm walking down the street with no one at my side. People might think I'm crazy, but they can't see my ever-present Friend, the One Who declares that He'll be with me always.

It's often difficult, but I try to talk to Him just like anybody else. If I find myself sounding pompous and churchy, I shut up in group prayer. If I find myself actually praying more to *them* than to *Him*, I also get quiet very quickly. Once when we were praying the familiar group prayer where *everybody* prayed for *everybody* (i.e., even though the first person covered all the needs, everyone else prayed for all the needs all over again), I simply said "Ditto, Lord," when my turn came. I'm not sure that they understood, but I'm certain the *He* did. Sometimes I feel that I can actually hear Him laugh with me at our absurdities.

The most difficult prayer for many of us is the "recovery prayer", the one we need to pray after we have sinned, or we've been rebelling, or we've somehow been ignoring Him for a while. It helps to realize that in *any* relationship, "making up" is never easy, but it's



always worth it. Saying that I'm sorry, admitting I was wrong, facing up to my own incredible selfishness, none of these are easy. There are times when I wait for hours or days while I work up the nerve! But the joy of being forgiven, accepted, and understood, eventually overcomes my embarrassment and shame.

PRAISE: Did you ever sing a "special" song for a friend? Was there a tune on the radio that became "your" song? Sometimes praise starts here. I recall singing exuberantly at my church, but one day one hymn stood out above all the rest. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" became more than just a hymn; it opened up some deeply personal expressions between me and the Lord. Now I often search for choruses and hymns that truly reflect *my* heart. I read Psalms of praise and join in on the Psalmist's worship.

I have often recommended an assortment of praise albums to clients. MARANTHA! Music now has the popular "Praise" albums. They also have "Hymns of Praise", "Praise Strings", and "Psalms Alive". The Sparrow Company has released several albums called "Communion" and Church in the City of Houston has just completed their third "Worship" album. For me, these have been among the best in leading me into praise and worship that I could sing along with.

INTIMACY: My best friends are also my highest priorities. When give the choice, I'd almost always rather be with them. I've noticed in recent years that I actually prefer being alone far more than I ever did before. Sometimes that's because I have finally become my own friend. Other times, it's just to be reflective. For me, this is both time alone and time with Jesus. Although it isn't marked by formal prayer, it is a time when I'm searching my thoughts and asking Him what He thinks of all that I'm thinking and planning. It occurred to me that those are thoughts that I reserve for my closest friends. To lay them out for another's view and criticism reflects a Level 4 relationship.

Another expression of intimacy for me is to "walk and talk". The picture of two friends going "out for a walk" together reflects the depth of relationships that I seek. Sometimes it's good to take that walk without the human companion, and without the stereo

headphones, and simply walk and talk with Jesus. Sometimes sing, sometimes reflect, sometimes talk aloud, sometimes *listen* to what He's been trying to say.

The key to all of this is “building” and “growth”. New relationships often have their awkward moments. “Changing gears” in a relationship can often be uncomfortable. That's okay. We don't have to become “ultimate friends” overnight. (Most of us have known the various traumas that come from becoming “instant ultimate friends”.) Allow the relationships to grow gradually, work through your awkwardness, but don't ignore this willing Friend Who stands waiting in the wings.