

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

UNIT V Key 3 SCRIPTURE

SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE: Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. I Corinthians 12:1

READ: “Born in Sin Not to Sin” and “Spiritual Gifts and Definitions” (at the end of this Key)

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

1. After reading I Corinthians 12:4-11, what gift or gifts do you sense that you have? What do you see in your life that indicates that you have this gift or gifts? Please use additional paper as necessary.

2. What do I Corinthians 12:12-21 and Romans 12:10 tell us our attitude should be toward other believers, especially in regard to how they practice their gifts?

3. Please read I Corinthians 12:22-26 and then the following story, which will be followed by the question.

In a small church, a group of faithful church ladies meets throughout the winter to sew quilts for the needy. In the spring, a shipload of quilts sewn by church ladies all across North America sets out for a port in a developing country.

At sunset in a refugee camp somewhere in the world, a Christian missionary comes and sets up video equipment. The “Jesus” film is shown to the crowd that gathers,

wrapped up in the quilts made by the church ladies. The message of love reaches their hearts. When the film is finished, many pray with the missionary for salvation.

Some people believe that spiritual gifts are arranged in a hierarchy, with some demonstrating more spiritual advancement than others.

Are they right or wrong? Why?

4. What do Romans 12:3 and I Corinthians 12:26 say to you?

5. What does I Corinthians 12:31a say to you?

6. What is necessary for any use of our gifts to be productive, according to I Corinthians 13:1-3?

7. What does Romans 12:6-8 & 11 say to you?

8. Often the more aware we are of our own spiritual gifts, the more we appreciate the contributions made by others. What are some of the spiritual gifts you detect in others in your church or fellowship group?

9. What gifts did Ananias have (Acts 9:10-18)? How did he use them to help the Christian Church?
10. What gifts did Barnabas have (Acts 4:36, 9:26-27, 11:22-26, 13:1-5)? How did he use them to help the Christian Church?
11. What has perhaps been Barnabas' longest-lasting gift to the Church (Acts 13:44-48)?
12. What are some of the results you have seen from using your own gifts?
13. Did you use any memorized Scripture to battle temptation lately? What was the result?
14. How is your spiritual life in general, how are your private devotions, and how are things at your church/fellowship group?

Plan of Action:

BORN IN SIN, NOT TO SIN

It is a painful fact that we are all born in sin (Psalm 51:5). So often, without really understanding why or wanting to do what is wrong, we sin (Romans 7:15).

After a while, perhaps because we see that doing wrong has hurt us or because we feel a sense of guilt over what we have done, we feel ashamed, and we truly wish that we would not have done what was wrong.

Our natural predisposition to sin prevails in our lives until God through Christ enters the picture. With God comes His Law, which helps to show us what is right and what is wrong. But knowing God's Law does not guarantee that we will do what is right and never sin.

God knew from the beginning that because we are sinners we would need more than His Law to keep us from sin. So He gave us his love (Gospel) through the gift of His only Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

God's gift of love does not change how we are born. We are born in sin, and that sin seeks to take over and destroy our lives. Still, because of God's Law and His love, we gain the knowledge of sin and the desire and strength we need to keep from sinning.

When we are plagued by a specific sin and the temptation to fall into that sin over and over again, we can rest assured that God loves us dearly. Every time we go to Him to confess that sin, He forgives us through Christ.

However, being born in sin does not give us the right to sin. Yes, we can be forgiven over and over again. Yes, we are dearly loved no matter how great our sin may be. Yet, when we continue to sin, no longer ask for forgiveness, or no longer believe that what we do is sin, God's Law shows us that we are wrong and warns us about what will happen if we do not repent – we will not be saved.

This can happen so quickly in the case of homosexual and lesbian behavior, which is condemned by God in His Word, but, connected to our sexuality, encompasses the whole person. It is easy to make the mistake of feeling that homosexuality “is” the person created by God.

The knowledge that homosexual and lesbian sexual behavior is sin can be very clear, but the “feelings” are unclear. Sadly, it is very often what we “feel” rather than what we “know” which causes us to sin.

As sinful human beings we are constantly searching for what makes us feel good. Initially homosexual and lesbian sexual encounters or relationships can produce good feelings. Sin always feels good, at first.

Sexual gratification can make us feel so good that it completely erases our knowledge of sin. God’s Laws become nonexistent or at the very least a big blur. We want or even need God’s love, but we are unable to show God how much we love Him by obeying God’s Commandments (John 14:15); and consequently, we do not feel God’s love at work in our lives.

In a desperate attempt to gain God’s love, we change His Law. We try to justify our behavior. If we believe that God created us with homosexual or lesbian desires, we erase our guilt; but the pain of not being able to love and obey God remains, and it slowly tears away at our soul.

Thankfully, the very same pain -- which we hate, which we feel tearing us apart, and which never seems to go away -- can enable us to turn from sin and live in loving obedience to God’s Word.

Our pain can lead us to God’s Word, where we find that only the homosexual and lesbian behavior is condemned. The person is loved by God, and the sinful condition is dealt with through the love and forgiveness offered in Christ.

Our pain can lead us to a growing number of Christian people who understand our struggles and will hold us accountable for our sin and help lead us to repentance and a stronger faith, which can keep us from repeating the same sin over and over again.

With the exception of Adam and Eve, who fell into sin after they were created, all people are born in sin. All people are also born with the Law written in their hearts (Romans 2:15). We know that homosexual and lesbian behavior is sin.

When we refuse to strive to be perfect, sin does take over our lives. Instead of understanding that we are born in sin, we believe that we are born to sin. We quickly conclude that sin is natural, a part of us that we cannot control and should not desire to control. Sin tricks us into believing that what we are doing makes us feel good and therefore is good for us.

Our faithful return to the saving knowledge of the Scriptures (God's Law and love) can free us from these beliefs which harm us. We were born in sin, but the knowledge of God's living and abiding Word causes us to be born anew (I Peter 1:23) with the desire and strength to love and seek to obey God and "feel" His love at work in our lives.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND DEFINITIONS

(The list and definitions are taken from the notebook entitled “Enlightened with His Gifts”, assembled by David Hoover and Roger Leenerts.)

APOSTLES (Ephesians 4 & I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume and exercise general leadership over a number of churches with an extraordinary desire to proclaim to the others the message and meaning of the Gospel, which is spontaneously recognized and appreciated by those churches (“Apostle” in the wider sense).

PROPHET (I Corinthians 12, Romans 12, & Ephesians 4) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to interpret the Scripture (revelation) correctly and to apply its message of Law and Gospel to the needs of people in a given situation in a public setting.

EVANGELIST (Ephesians 4) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to share the Gospel with unbelievers in such a way that through the working of the Spirit many become disciples of Jesus Christ and responsible members of the Body of Christ.

PASTOR (Ephesians 4) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume a personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers.

TEACHER (Ephesians 4) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to communicate the Word of God relevant to the welfare and ministry of the Body and its members in such a way that others will learn.

EXHORTATION (Romans 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to draw close to individuals in the Body with comfort, consolation, encouragement, counsel, and prayer in such a way that they feel helped and healed by use of the Word.

WORD OF WISDOM (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to know the will and work of God as pertains to the practical and spiritual management of life.

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to have an exceptionally thorough understanding/grasp of the great truths of divine revelation, particularly the mysteries of the Gospel, coupled with the ability to expound them in a clear and convincing manner as well as to apply them to individual cases in life.

SERVING (Romans 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to identify the unmet needs involved in a task related to God's work and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired goals.

HELPS (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to invest the talents they have in the life and ministry of other members of the Body, thereby enabling/helping them to increase the effectiveness of their own spiritual gifts.

LEADERSHIP (Romans 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to give direction to worthwhile endeavors and/or people in such a way that people follow and goals are accomplished to the glory of God.

ADMINISTRATION (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to understand clearly the goals and objectives of a particular unit of the Body of Christ and to develop and execute effective plans for the accomplishment of those goals.

GIVING (Romans 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to contribute their material resources to the work of the Lord with liberality and cheerfulness.

SHOWING MERCY (Romans 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals, both Christian and non-Christian, who suffer distressing physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual problems, and to translate that compassion into cheerfully-done deeds which reflect Christ's love and alleviate the suffering.

DISCERNING THE SPIRITS (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior purported to be of God is in reality divine, demonic, psychological, or artificial.

FAITH (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to demonstrate a heroic, unwavering trust and confidence in the power of God to reveal Himself in extraordinary deeds that may seem impossible to humans.

HOSPITALITY (Romans 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to provide an open house and a warm welcome for those in need of food and lodging.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to speak to God in a language they have never learned and/or to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His people through divinely-anointed utterance in a language they have never learned.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to make known in the vernacular the message of one who speaks in tongues.

HEALING (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to serve as human intermediaries through whom it pleases God to cure illness and restore health apart from the use of natural means.

MIRACLES (I Corinthians 12) The special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to serve as human intermediaries through whom it pleases God to perform powerful acts that are perceived by observers to have altered the ordinary course of nature.