

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

UNIT V Key 4 FORGIVENESS

SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE: He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall no longer be any . . . mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.
Revelations 21:4

Someday the pain will come to an end. Someday Jesus will return to Earth to take us home. Someday the things that matter to us so much now will pass away. Someday we will be with our Lord in Heaven. All the pain stops at the front gate. It is forbidden to pass. Fear, shame, humiliation, sadness, loneliness, painful memories, etc., will be left outside. The devil cannot take one step further, and his voice will be forever silenced. This is what Jesus went to the cross to accomplish; this was His entire purpose, to reconcile us to God so that He could take away the evil for all time.

On Earth we struggle. We struggle when we are tempted to sin, when we hesitate to repent, when our sins have a grip on us, and when our minds are bombarded with conflict and frustration. We struggle with our emotions, our memories, and mental torment, as we do the hard work involved in forgiveness. We struggle with our self-will as we learn to surrender.

We are weak. Confession of sin, forgiving others, and surrendering to the Lord all bring rewards, and since you have gotten this far in the program, you have probably learned that. But you probably did not learn that without struggles. You may recall the warning that was given early in the program: that when temptations to ssa/ma/tx diminish, other temptations will become more obvious. That is partly because your conscience has become more sensitive to sin as you studied the Word more and let the Holy Spirit renew your mind. Sins that never bothered you, that you never before tried to stop, and that you gave yourself permission to continue doing, are now burdens on your conscience.

You may even be struggling with the opposite temptation, to lust for the opposite sex, as you learn to put godly boundaries around brand-new heterosexual feelings. You were willing to let the Holy Spirit take your sexuality through the fire of God's Grace, and you are probably noticing that the new temptations feel better than the old. But they are still a struggle, and will be for the rest of your life.

To cope with the struggle, we fix our eyes on the cross, where Jesus endured more than we can ever imagine. But we must not stop there. Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him. We endure struggles also for the joy set before us. We must never lose sight of the reality that these struggles are temporary. There is a fixed endpoint for those who put their faith in Jesus.

Others wronged us. It hurts to feel helpless and humiliated. It hurts to surrender fantasies of revenge, believing that others will go unpunished for what they did to us. It hurts to grieve our painful memories, rather than indulge in the thrill of power that revenge fantasies provide. It hurts when we assess the damage done to our lives as a result of being wronged.

Perhaps we were the ones who committed wrong against others. We struggle with the pain of realizing what we did, how we damaged someone else, how we caused problems we are unable to go back and fix. We struggle with our pride as we consider how to ask for forgiveness. The Holy Spirit is there in the middle with us, showing us if and how amends are to be made, but still our awakened consciences fill us with remorse. We struggle to find a way to move forward to live productive lives of dignity and self-respect, realizing that the memories of what we did will be there until our last breath.

Jesus meets us in the middle of our pain. He totally identified with suffering humanity. On the cross He bore both our sins and our pain. The truths that set us free are sometimes painful to grasp. As the lies of the enemy of our souls are exposed and truth spoken against them, we will feel some degree of struggle.

Why the struggle? The devil does not want to let up on us. He wants to take us away from Jesus, to get us off the path that leads to Heaven. To that end, he will lie to us for the rest of our lives. He will tell us that the pain we sometimes still feel means we have not truly forgiven; he will tell us that the anger we sometimes still feel means we have not truly forgiven. He lies, but we need not allow him to use the “echo” of our memories to falsely accuse us.

He does not want to be alone in Hell; in his misery, he will want company. He will try to torment us now with his lies so that he can torment us forever. He knows that he has the rest of our lives to get us, he hates to lose even one soul to Jesus, and he will whatever he can to get us back.

In the midst of battle, we can easily lose sight of our eventual goal. Even with Jesus walking alongside of us every step of the way, we struggle. Even when the Holy Spirit is exposing lies, revealing truth, and breaking chains, we struggle. But someday that will all end. The victories we experience now, however awesome, are small compared to the final victory we will receive when we die. In Heaven, there will be no struggle. We will no longer be capable of sinning. We will be finally and forever free.

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

Hebrews 12:2-3

Romans 8:18

Romans 8:31-34

Romans 8:35-39

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

1. On a scale of 1-10 (1 is lowest, 10 is highest), how forgiving are you at this point?

Please explain your answer.

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

Please explain your answer.

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

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

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.

6. Think of those who have wronged you. What can you do to help prevent them from ending up in Hell?

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

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

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?

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

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

Plan of Action: