

## **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM**

### **UNIT I KEY 1                      DESIRE**

**SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE:** Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

Every journey begins by taking the first step. You are beginning a journey that will lead you to the freedom that you seek. One's first step is having a DESIRE to be free. The truth is that many people have faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior but do not know how to use their faith to become free from besetting sin.

There are several reasons why many ssa/ma/tx people do not experience freedom in Christ. One is that they have been given wrong information. Society tells them they were "born that way". Believing they cannot change prevents many from actively persisting in the change effort. When a strong temptation strikes, they accept it as "proof" that they will never change; and they therefore give in to the temptation. But the truth is that the genetic theories have never been proven and the developmental theories have never been disproven. Political correctness has caused a great deal of confusion in society's understanding of the issues.

Others do not experience freedom in Christ because they are uncertain if that is what they really DESIRE. Giving up the thrills is hard. Their relationships may have provided the only source of closeness they have ever had. Even when their relationships have been unworkable, ssa/ma/tx people continue to hope that somehow these relationships can be made to work if they try a little harder or find the right person.

Another reason that some do not experience freedom in Christ is FEAR. Ssa/ma/tx people often identify so strongly with their attractions that they cannot imagine life without them. One frequently asked question is, "What kind of man/woman will I become if I

pursue this course? What kind of life and identity are waiting for me at the end of the trail?"

Considering an identity change raises one's anxiety. Only God's mercy motivates anyone to pursue holiness. Only God's mercy makes anyone willing to let Him turn him/her into the man or woman He wants him/her to be, without knowing beforehand what that person will be like.

Not everyone who pursues change from ssa/ma/tx becomes heterosexual. No one can guarantee that anyone who struggles to overcome ssa/ma/tx will become heterosexual, although about a third of overcomers do. Another third experience significant reduction in ssa/ma/tx attractions, find joy in being single and celibate, and feel that I Corinthians 7 was written for people like them. Although they do not get married to people of the opposite sex, they feel that they have resolved many emotional issues, have become stronger, have grown in their faith, and have overcome depression. They feel that their relationships with God, self, and others have greatly improved. (The final third drop out in the first few months).

Some do not experience freedom in Christ because they hope to earn merit from God by living clean lives and doing good works. They are tempted to believe that God will overlook their ssa/ma/tx sins if they do enough good deeds to outweigh the bad deeds. But that is a human-made philosophy. The Bible teaches that we are all sinners in need of forgiveness. None of us are good enough to approach a holy, sovereign, and just God on our own. The good news is that God's favor was won on our behalf by Jesus.

How do you perceive God? How do you perceive Jesus? Do you acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God? We often project onto God the problems we had with our parents when we were children. If a parent was critical, we might perceive God as critical; if our parent was abusive, we might perceive God as abusive; if our parent was uninvolved and aloof, we might perceive God the same way. If we perceive God negatively, we will be

motivated to rid ourselves of sin in order to “clean ourselves up” before we approach Him.

The truth is that we are not able to “clean ourselves up”. We can only come to God as we are and let Him clean us up. Jesus made full satisfaction for all of our sins when He went to the cross, and we can only approach God as penitent sinners seeking forgiveness.

Living clean lives and doing good works count for nothing; only faith in the mercy of God in Christ can save us. No merits of ours can make us righteous before God; only the merits of Jesus can make us righteous before our merciful God. Jesus did for us what we can never do for ourselves.

The only compelling reason to overcome any sin is the mercy of God offered through Jesus Christ. The word for that is GRACE: forgiveness of sin offered as a free gift because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross on our behalf. Grace alone motivates us to change our lives so we can become more like Jesus. Are you ready to take your sexuality into the fire of God’s Grace and let Him begin His work in you? Are you ready to go before God, become completely honest with Him, and give up your own self-will? Are you ready to allow the Spirit to shine His light on your sins and bring you to total transparency before God? Romans 8:1 promises us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

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

Psalm 37:4

I Corinthians 10:13

Luke 4:1-13

Ephesians 6:10-18

**STUDY GUIDE** (Write on the back or use additional paper if need be.)

1. On a scale of 1-10, how great is your desire to overcome ssa/ma/tx (1 is low and 10 is high)?
2. What are your reasons for wanting out?
3. When will God grant you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4)?
4. What do you think will be the hardest parts of overcoming?
5. What warnings and encouragements are found in James 4:4-6?
6. What do we need to do to get help from God (James 1:5)?

7. What can short-circuit our prayers (James 1:1-8)?
8. What should be our reasons for not doing ANY sin (Genesis 39:9 & 2 Corinthians 5:13-15)?
9. What is our condition because of our faith in Christ (John 8:32-36)?
10. What some things you have learned from this Key study?
11. On a scale of 1-10, how much victory have you had lately? Please explain your answer. (Victory is measured in how much you have overcome temptation.)
12. Is there anything special you would like to talk about?

Plan of Action (Read the handout Plans of Action and make plans as specific as possible.)

## NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

It is helpful to recognize temptation early, so one can block it immediately. The battle is truly in the mind, and we need to be alert to our thoughts. Negative thoughts can lead us to temptation by putting us into bad moods; then the ssa/ma/tx temptations become the drug to make us feel better, at last temporarily. Here are some that seem common to anyone who is in the grip of an addictive sin.

**Envy:** We often grew up in circumstances where other children seemed to be more talented, more loved, better treated, “luckier”, more approved of, and happier. We did not know how to gain that favored status, and we became envious of the ones who did. We often envied children of the same sex who seemed to possess that indefinable something we call “masculinity” or “femininity”. We envied children who had more loving families and who were not being abused. We might also have envied children of the opposite sex, who seemed to receive more love and social privileges.

**Self-pity:** We often grew up in circumstances where there were abundant reasons to feel sorry for ourselves, as we compared our lives to those of other children and felt that ours were lacking. Even after our circumstances improved, we continued to compare ourselves with others and thereby maintained an attitude of self-pity.

**Resentment:** We often grew up in circumstances where we were verbally, physically, or sexually abused. Emotional and/or physical needs were not met. We might have been hurt by parents, parent substitutes, other authority figures, other family members, other children, molesters, partners, and others.

**Cynicism:** Cynics put the worst construction on the words, actions, and motivations of other people. Cynics are deeply mistrustful, and determined never to get hurt again. They put their feelers out, alert for injustices and possible offenses, and are therefore easily offended. He/she does not see the role he/she plays in accumulating more hurts. They put on mud-colored glasses and then become angry because the world looks like mud.

**Attitude of superiority to cover up deeper feelings of inferiority:** Men with alternative sexualities often feel superior to straight men, because they can often appreciate things that straight men do not. However, they sometimes desire to possess straight men's masculine qualities.

Lesbians often judge straight women as lacking self-reliance, and sleeping with men only to gain social advantages. Lesbians often view themselves as strong women, while viewing straight women as weak and overly reliant on men. Lesbians also feel superior to men and are proud of themselves for not needing them. Transsexual men often feel superior to women.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Every overcomer is unique, and has his/her own combination of negative thoughts. This list is provided only to help the overcomer begin identifying his/her own negative thoughts, as the Holy Spirit brings them to conscious awareness.

These are the kinds of thoughts that the Holy Spirit wants to take captive to the Lordship of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). He wants to re-wire our minds. These thoughts are all based on the lies of the devil (John 8:44), from which Jesus came to set us free (John 8:32 and 36).

**PIECES OF ARMOR**

**Truth:** Temptation is fed and maintained by lies (John 8:44). Overcoming a particular temptation becomes easier if the lie is exposed to one's conscious mind and the truth from God's Word is spoken against it. Ssa/ma/tx temptations make promises that are not kept. The lifestyle is often based on fantasies that lead to disappointment. We need to become totally transparent with God about our sins and honest with ourselves and others.

**Righteousness:** This is the external righteousness of Jesus with which He covers the penitent sinner (Romans 3:22-24). When we start to read the word "righteous" as the alien righteousness imputed to us by God's mercy, rather than righteousness based on our own virtue, every passage in the Bible that speaks of "righteousness" takes on a whole new meaning. If we are protected by the external righteousness of Christ, we are protected from the false accusations of the enemy of our soul. Romans 8:1 becomes our reality.

**Peace:** Legalism destroys peace, and legalists are not peaceful people. When we repent of sin and accept God's forgiveness, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). God is for us, not against us. He never wars against penitent sinners; instead, He covers them with His mercy. We need not be angry with ourselves, because God is not angry with us. He pours out His goodness and mercy on us.

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To bring about real peace between warring factions of people, both parties need to repent before God and then to ask each other's forgiveness.

**Faith:** Our faith cannot be in our own virtue. We can only put our faith in the mercy of God in Christ. Our faith is in the merits of Jesus. We have no righteousness of our own with which to influence or leverage Him on our behalf; we can only throw ourselves without reservation on His Grace. The incoming arrows are temptations, doubts, false accusations, fears that God has abandoned us, loss of hope, negative thoughts, etc. Confidence in the covering of His Atonement on our behalf makes us able to withstand



the flaming arrows.

**Salvation:** The Holy Spirit brings it to us because by ourselves we are not able to see the need of it, desire it, reach out for it, or believe in it. Nothing in us can bring us under conviction of sin; only the Holy Spirit has such power. We cannot initiate our salvation; any decision we make is totally in response to what the Spirit brings to us (John 15:16).

**Word:** Key 3 is about the use of Scripture to fight temptation. The Word is our one offensive weapon. Meanwhile, if a verse speaks to your heart, you can begin at once to memorize it.

It is important to remember that the armor is provided, we do not have it in us to put it on without the Holy Spirit, and God furnishes all of it.