

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

UNIT I Key 3 SCRIPTURE

SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE: And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.
Ephesians 6:17

The Christian walk is a battle, and for some, ssa/ma/tx temptations are part of those battles. God wants us to win, and He has furnished us with what we need to win. His Word is a sharp sword when it is used. Have you learned how to use it?

Jesus shows us how in Matthew 4. In the wilderness, after Jesus had fasted for 40 days, the devil came to Him when He was most vulnerable. The devil attacked at Jesus' weakest points and tempted Him to disobey the will of God the Father. The devil even tried quoting Scripture out of context to persuade Jesus to disobey God's will, but Jesus knew the whole counsel of God. Three times Jesus was tempted, and each time He quoted from the Scriptures to stop the devil. He used the Scriptures as God intended, and the devil left in defeat. The Word of God was too much for him. Jesus emerged victorious on our behalf and showed us how to win.

All sins are preceded by temptations. Temptations are based upon lies of the devil. The devil is a liar, and his lies empower the temptations. Ssa/ma/tx temptations are no exception. To overcome, we need the Word of God. The Word exposes the lies, speaks truth to our situation, and points us continually to the mercy of God and the greatness of the Atonement paid for us on the cross. It shows us our sin and shows us our Savior. It promises that Jesus Himself will get into the trenches and fight for us whenever He is asked. It promises us mercy and help in time of need.

We first need to know the difference between right and wrong, between God's will and our self-will. We need to be honest with God and confess that at times we have tried to twist His Word to excuse our sins rather than expose our sins. Jesus knew the whole counsel of God, so He could not be fooled. His emotions and self-will could not trick Him. He could not be manipulated to do

wrong while pretending to have good motives. He knew that if He stood up to temptation, it would eventually come to an end.

Have you ever stood up to temptation and won? Do you remember how good it felt? Did you hope that from then on life would get easier? Sometimes it does become easier for a while until the next onslaught of temptation comes. We can expect this pattern to repeat itself all our lives; it is how we grow in Christ. Ssa/ma/tx temptations diminish with time if we consistently resist them. Then other temptations will become more obvious, and the battle against self-will will continue until we come before our Lord in heaven.

To resist temptation, we need to be in the Word. We have been told the importance of reading the Bible daily, but we must also consider how we understand it. We easily perceive the Bible as a collection of laws that we cannot keep, so we feel discouraged and hopeless. We need to learn how every passage reflects the mercy of God. Even in His judgments He continually offers His mercy. His judgments on sinners are opportunities for them to repent, and no penitent sinner is ever turned away.

Memorizing is important. The most helpful verses speak to our hearts, assure us of God's goodness and mercy, and remind us that Jesus has won on our behalf the victory that we could not win for ourselves. The Holy Spirit can help us find the verses that grip us at our deepest levels, and He will help us to recall them in our times of need.

We need verses that speak not only against the sins of deeds and words but also against the sins of the mind, where the real battles are won or lost. Often when we use Scripture to stop our negative and ungodly attitudes, we are less easily tempted by sexual thoughts and therefore less tempted to act upon them. The more consistently we use Scripture to stop our negative thoughts, the more our minds re-align themselves away from the ungodly thoughts and more around the Word. The more we gain control over our thoughts, the more calm and orderly our minds become.

Consistently blocking our ungodly thoughts with Scripture will be hard at first, but with practice it becomes easier. The more we replace the lies of the devil with the truth from God's Word, the more free we become. This freedom brings a sense of power over our minds and our lives, power that can only come from God. The truth really does set us free, and we become free indeed.

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

Psalm 119:105

Psalm 119:11

II Timothy 3:16-17

Hebrews 4:12

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

1. On a scale of 1 – 10, how much memorizing of Scripture have you done (1 is the lowest, 10 is the highest)?
2. On a scale of 1 – 10, how much do you agree that you need to memorize?
3. Have you ever used Scripture to fight temptation? Did it help? Would you share an example?

4. What ssa/ma/tx temptations are strongest in your life?
5. Do you think ssa/ma/tx temptations are more powerful than other temptations? Why or why not?
6. Why did God give us the Scriptures (John 8:32-36)?
7. Why is studying God's Word important (Proverbs 1:22 & 23)?
8. Do you think God's Word promises freedom from ssa/ma/tx (I Corinthians 6:9-11)?
9. How can we help one another? Before we try to help someone else, what do we need to do first (Colossians 3:16)?
10. What new things have you learned about the Scriptures?

11. On a scale of 1 – 10, how victorious have you been lately? Please explain your answer.

(Victory is measured by how much you have overcome temptation.)

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