

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

UNIT I Key 5

LOVE

SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE: God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. I John 4:16b

Love is the most powerful force in Heaven and on earth. We need faith, hope, and love while we live here on earth, but only love will endure for eternity. After we die, we will not need faith or hope anymore because we will have what we had believed and hoped for: eternal life. We will need love throughout eternity. Love will go on because God goes on, and He is LOVE.

God's love caused Him to send Jesus to earth to suffer and die to save us from our sins. Love made Jesus willing to come. He was the perfect Sacrifice. How did He benefit from sacrificing Himself? He sacrificed Himself because love is His very nature, His essence.

Love is the reason that God comes in pursuit of us; He is the Shepherd in search of His lost sheep. Love is the reason He does not require us to earn even part of our salvation. Love is the reason that forgiveness of sins is a free gift. Love is the reason that no one who is truly penitent is turned away. Love is the reason Jesus stands between the sinner and the stones of the accusers. Love is the reason Jesus reaches down to the chief of sinners; He is a shameless bottom-feeder. How could we not love Him back?

We all need love. We need to be loved and to love others. God is the source of all love; love is His essence and His invention. In our current society, however, love and sex have become so confused that some people have literally grown up unable to tell the difference. They have been lied to about what love truly is.

Ssa/ma/tx is frequently driven by a search for the love that has been missing. Sex is often used to fill up what feels like the missing pieces of ourselves. Sex can become the only glue that holds a relationship together and the means by which people frantically seek a reassuring bond with others. Sex might eventually carry the whole load of a troubled

relationship, as if the right kind of sex or enough of it can solve everything. Sexuality then carries a burden that no one can bear indefinitely. Heterosexual people are also vulnerable to this process; they might need their sexuality sanctified by God's mercy in the same way as do ssa/ma/tx people.

Sex is entirely God's creation, and He knows what a powerful force it is; therefore, He put boundaries around it to protect the participants. We cross His boundaries at our own risk. When we cross those boundaries, we open the door to fears of being exploited, to mistrust, to concerns about the partner's faithfulness, to insecurities regarding performance, to concerns about how one compares with one's partner's previous partners, to hidden resentments that surface many years later, and to hidden guilt, and this list is by no means exhaustive.

The solution for a heterosexual married couple is to go before God and confess their pre-marital and extra-marital sins. They need to confess any manipulation or deception they have used to tempt each other to participate in sin. They need to repent of exploiting each other or treating each other like sexual objects. They can then leave the sins of the past under the covering of God's forgiveness. They can move forward under His Grace to forgive each other, re-build the relationship, and put sex in its rightful place as a means of serving each other's needs in love.

The ssa/ma/tx person needs to find out what love really is. Love puts God first and willingly obeys His will. Love puts others' needs ahead of one's own. Love does not use others for one's own gratification. Love willingly examines one's own motivations and confesses any hidden agendas driven by selfishness. Love is kind, gentle, and patient. Love does not allow itself to be tempted by one's injured pride. Love does the right thing for the sake of doing the right thing and leaves the consequences to God. Love measures itself against the love of Jesus and confesses where it falls short. No one will become perfectly loving in this lifetime, but until we come before our Lord in Heaven, love will be a process of growth.

The more we confess our own sins and receive forgiveness, the more we love God. The more we confront our own sins, the more easily we forgive others. Forgiving others means we become **willing** to love them. When we become willing to love a person who has harmed us, we become truly free. God is love, and we only have to be willing to receive.

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

I John 4:19

I John 4:20

I John 4

I John 5

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

1. On a scale of 1-10, indicate what you believe to be the strength of your love (1 is the lowest, 10 is the highest).

2. What do you learn about love from I Corinthians 13, commonly called “the Love Chapter”?

3. Did you learn anything new about love?

4. What does this tell you about your love?

5. In what areas are you the weakest?

6. What do you learn about love from I John 3 & 4?

7. What makes us able to love God (I John 4:19)?

8. What makes us able to love other people (Matthew 22:39 & I John 4:19-21)?

9. What is the test of our love (John 14:15)?

10. Why is it necessary to have a good self-image (Matthew 22:39)?

11. How does God show in this passage that He is not unreasonable?

12. 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.)

13. On a scale of 1-10, how much memory work have you done?

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

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

16. Is there anyone you are having trouble forgiving? What seems to be making that difficult?

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