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KEYS TO FREEDOM

Keys to Freedom is an 8-week discipleship study exploring biblical principles of freedom used for four decades in Mercy Multiplied's Residential and Outpatient Programs. Many people have walked through these keys on their own or in a small group setting. Others have benefitted greatly from the guidance of a counselor as they have confronted deep life hurts and moved toward freedom. But *Keys to Freedom* is **not** about treatment; instead, the study is about transformation, and it is built on two fundamental ideas.

The first foundational element to this study is a visual metaphor. Our lives are like trees. Branches represent behaviors, including things we want to overcome. The trunk represents our belief system. Roots represent the origins of our life struggles. We normally focus attention on what we can see and work to cut off unhealthy branches of behavior in our lives, but the real issues are at root level. And if the roots are never addressed, the branches will always be unhealthy. That's why behavior modification cannot be the end goal. It does not bring real freedom! *Keys to Freedom* provides tools that help people connect to the heart of God, allowing Him to heal and restore their lives from the roots up. As this happens, the "tree" becomes healthy, and unhealthy "branches" ultimately fall off because they don't have anything to hold onto anymore. We believe this is Jesus' desire for us—true freedom!

The second foundational idea in this study is that lasting healing and freedom are not possible without the presence of God and acceptance of this simple truth: He communicates with us. Only God can heal our hearts, therefore we must learn to access and receive truth from God for ourselves. That's how we experience the healing and freedom only He can give. God's primary means of communication with us are through His Word and His Spirit. We can learn to recognize God's voice, and we can also learn how to address things that may keep us from hearing God. (In *Keys to Freedom*, we share a practical exercise for learning and growing in our ability to listen and hear from God.)

With these foundational concepts in mind, here are the seven keys to freedom explored in this study:

Committing and Connecting to Christ

If there is no commitment to Christ, it will be very challenging for us to progress in the healing journey because we lack connection to the *source* of true and lasting freedom—Jesus. In addition, the power of the Holy Spirit will not be fully activated, so we will not have the resources necessary to claim our authority in Christ. Individuals pursuing these keys to freedom are invited to consider and examine their level of connection with the Lord, the posture of their heart toward Him, and then to explore anything standing in the way of an intimate relationship with God through Jesus.

Renewing the Mind

Romans 12:2 says that our lives are transformed when we renew our minds. Our belief systems include what we understand to be true about ourselves, God, others, and the world around us. Scientific studies have proven it is possible to redirect our neurological pathways or patterns of thought. The enemy has always attacked God's children through lies and deception. We must identify and break agreements we have made with the enemy by believing those lies, and then replace them with truth from God.

Healing Life's Hurts

When the hurts in our lives are not healed, we operate out of brokenness, fear, and even a skewed sense of reality. Painful experiences can grow roots like rejection, bitterness, and abandonment and then grow unhealthy branches of behavior. But walking in freedom means no longer allowing our wounds to direct what we believe and how we behave. In fact, we can invite the Lord into our hurtful memories. We can process them with Jesus, get His perspective, and allow Him to heal us from the inside out.

Choosing to Forgive

Much of the hurt we experience comes from painful words and actions that take place in the context of relationships. So, our freedom journeys will eventually lead most of us to a crossroads of forgiveness. God's commandment to forgive isn't intended to make our lives difficult; He knows that forgiveness is a significant key to walking in freedom. But forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. It isn't a natural response, but a *supernatural* response. Forgiving is an active *process*, and as we continue to choose forgiveness, the Lord will honor our obedience, our feelings will shift, and our hearts will heal.

Breaking Generational Patterns

We all inherit various healthy and unhealthy approaches to life. Some generational patterns may be genetic, while others are learned behaviors. The good news is God has given us the power to change these generational patterns through our *spiritual* bloodline. Jesus' perfect human life made possible a second birth. A new bloodline that supersedes the one into which we were born was created through His blood! To walk in freedom, we must identify negative patterns passed down to us, confess and surrender them, and claim God's promises over our lives and family.

Using Your Authority in Christ

When we commit our lives to Christ, we not only share in His death and burial; we also share in His resurrection and victory! Through Christ, we have authority over the enemy, and we can declare the truths of Scripture that are our inheritance over our lives. The enemy is out to steal our freedom, and the doors of our hearts, minds, and souls can be opened to different types of bondage. However, as we repent and submit ourselves to God, and as we resist the enemy, he will flee (from James 4). We have authority in Christ to walk away from bondage and close the door behind us!

Maintaining Lifelong Freedom

The journey to freedom is a lifelong process. We may want God to heal us and set us free instantly, but we are not called to be passive recipients of His power. Instead, we are invited to partner with Him in an ongoing process of healing and change that continues throughout our lives. *Keys to Freedom* identifies four things we must abide in or "stay in" to continue experiencing new levels of healing and freedom: the Word, prayer, fellowship, and accountability.



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