

Chapter 4:

PRAYING WITH PURPOSE: UNLEASHING THE SUPERNATURAL POWER OF GOD IN OUR LIVES



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



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**PRAYING WITH PURPOSE:
UNLEASHING THE SUPERNATURAL
POWER OF GOD IN OUR LIVES**

**BY: RON BROWN, NOLAN CROOKS, LAUREN KERN,
MICHAEL MERICLE, AND ALEX DELGADO**

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Teen Challenge of Southern California

5445 Chicago Ave

info@teenchallenge.org

teenchallenge.org

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Chapter 4:

Praying with Purpose: Unleashing the Supernatural Power of God in Our Lives

“In every storm there is a ‘Peace! Be still’. Christ will speak, where prayer’s call invites Him.”

—Jack Hayford

Prayer is our powerful, life-changing connection with the Creator of the universe. For those of us on the journey of recovery, prayer can be a lifeline, a source of strength, and a pathway to real-life change. As John Wesley once said, “God does nothing but by prayer, and everything with it.”

In this chapter, we’ll explore how prayer unleashes God’s supernatural power, bringing healing, hope, and purpose to our recovery journey. Whether you’re just starting out or have been on this path for a while, there’s always more to discover about the gift of prayer. A key part of this journey is being in a community that prays. When we pray together, we connect deeply—not just with God but with one another. This reminds us that we’re not alone, and a praying community offers the strength, encouragement, and accountability we need to keep moving forward. **As we pray together, we also begin to know God’s heart more intimately, aligning ourselves with His will, and His power is released in a mighty way.** This deeper connection helps us walk confidently in all that God has planned for us, opening the door to blessings and breakthroughs we might not have experienced otherwise.





Understanding Prayer

So, what exactly is prayer?

At its core, prayer is simply talking with God. It's sharing our hearts, our struggles, our joys, and our needs with our Heavenly Father. But it's also about listening, being open to the gentle promptings of His Spirit which bring comfort and guidance.

Here are a few types of prayer:

- **Adoration:** Praising God for who He is (Psalm 29, Psalm 59:16, 95:1-11, 145:3, Isaiah 12:4-5, Revelation 5:13)
- **Confession:** Admitting our sins and shortcomings (Psalm 32:3-5, Psalm 51, Proverbs 28:13, 1 John 1:9)
- **Thanksgiving:** Expressing gratitude for God's favor and blessings (Psalm 7, Psalm 50:23, Psalm 95:2, Psalm 107:29-32)
- **Supplication:** Asking for God's help and intervention in our circumstances (Psalm 13:1, Psalm 17:1, Psalm 43:17, Psalm 143:1, Psalm 145:18, Jeremiah 29:12 & 33:3, Philippians 4:6-7)
- **Corporate Prayer:** When believers pray together in unity, they're seeking God's guidance, intervention, or His heart as one body, which releases His supernatural power in response to their collective faith (2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 145:18, Matthew 18:20, Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42, Acts 3:1-10, Acts 4:31, Acts 6:4, Acts 12:5, Acts 16:25, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 6:18-20, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Hebrews 10:24-25).

In recovery, prayer plays a crucial role. It's not just about asking God to remove our cravings (though that's certainly part of it!). Prayer helps us build a relationship with God, find strength in weak moments, and discover our true identity as His sons and daughters.

The Bible gives us a beautiful example of heartfelt, persistent prayer in the story of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem's walls were in ruins, he didn't just shoot up a quick prayer. The Bible tells us,

"When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven."

Nehemiah 1:4

Nehemiah's prayer wasn't rushed or casual – it was deep, emotional, and persistent.

Jesus also taught us about prayer. In Matthew 6:5-6, He said, *“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others ... But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.”* Prayer is about sincerely connecting with God.

And again, in Matthew 8:5-13, a Roman centurion approaches Jesus, asking for healing for his paralyzed servant. His request highlights the power of prayer and faith in Christ’s authority. In verse 8, the centurion says, *“Just say the word, and my servant will be healed,”* showing his deep trust in Jesus’ power to heal with just His word. He didn’t need to witness a physical act—he believed Jesus’ word alone was enough. In verse 13, Jesus acknowledges the centurion’s faith, and *“at that very hour,”* the servant is healed. This teaches us that prayer rooted in faith and trusting in God’s word can bring immediate and powerful results.



Break in the Journey



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

- Prayer is described as both sharing our hearts with God and listening for His Spirit’s guidance. When you pray, do you find it easier to talk or to listen? How can you grow in the listening side of prayer?
- The centurion believed Jesus’ word alone was enough to heal his servant. Where in your life do you need to trust God’s word more fully, even when you can’t see the results yet?

The Power of Prayer

In the journey of recovery, we often encounter mountains—challenges that seem impossible to overcome. However, we must remember that our faith alone is not enough to move these mountains; we must focus on the God who moves them. As Ron Brown emphasizes, *“You need a God who moves mountains more than you need a mountain-moving faith. God is the one who can split open seas, perform miracles, raise the dead, heal our souls, forgive our sin, and restore our lives.”* When we recognize this, we shift our attention from our limitations to God’s limitless power.

Prayer serves as our connection to this mountain-moving God. Even if our faith is small, like a mustard seed, it is enough when placed in the hands of an all-powerful God. When we speak to our mountains in prayer, we are not merely voicing our challenges but proclaiming God’s authority over them. Through prayer, we can find healing, forgiveness, and restoration, trusting in a God who can move every mountain in our path.

Prayer has the power to change things—not just around us but within us. As David Wilkerson often said, *“God always makes a way for a praying man [or woman].”* When we pray, we’re tapping into God’s limitless power.



Throughout the Bible, we see incredible examples of answered prayer:

- Hannah prayed for a child and gave birth to Samuel, one of Israel's greatest prophets (1 Samuel 1:9-28).
- Elijah prayed, and fire came down from heaven (1 Kings 18:16-39).
- Jehoshaphat prayed, and God caused the enemies of Judah to turn on each other, leading to their defeat without Judah needing to fight (2 Chronicles 20:1-22).
- Hezekiah prayed, and witnessed an impossible victory (Isaiah 37:14-37 & Isaiah 38:1-5).
- Jesus prayed, and Lazarus was raised from the dead (John 11:25-44).
- 120 people prayed in the upper room, the Holy Spirit fell, and the Church was born—leading to the salvation of 3,000 people just on that day (Acts 1:13-14, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 2:14-41).
- The early church prayed, and Peter was miraculously freed from prison (Acts 12:5-7).
- The early church leaders ministered to the Lord and fasted, and the Holy Spirit spoke and instructed them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for their missionary work, and after praying they sent them off (Acts 13:2-3).
- Paul and Silas prayed in prison, and God miraculously freed everyone in the jail, leading to the salvation of the jailer and his family (Acts 16:25-34).

These aren't just stories from long ago. God is still answering prayers today, bringing freedom from addiction, healing broken relationships, and transforming lives.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What has your experience with prayer been like so far in your recovery journey? How has it changed over time?
- Which type of prayer (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession, or corporate prayer) do you find easiest? Which do you find most challenging, and why?
- Can you share a time when you felt God answered your prayer in a significant way?
- What challenges do you face in maintaining a consistent prayer life? How might you overcome these?



Prayer and Community

While personal prayer is vital, there's also incredible power in praying together. Jesus said, *"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them"* (Matthew 18:20). Being part of a praying community provides support, accountability, and strengthens our faith as we witness God answering prayers collectively. James encourages us, *"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise"* (James 5:13). He reminds us that in times of need, we should seek the elders to pray over the sick and anoint them, for *"the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up"* (James 5:15). Confessing our struggles to one another allows us to bear each other's burdens and promotes a deeper sense of community. This, in turn, can lead to healing and breakthroughs in our lives. As James affirms, *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective"* (James 5:16), emphasizing the transformative impact of prayer within a Godly community.

- 1. Praying in Agreement:** This unity, or "symphony" of prayer, creates a spiritual bond that invites God's presence and power into our lives and situations.
- 2. Building Vulnerability through Community Prayer:** Praying in a group teaches us to be vulnerable with others, confessing our struggles and sharing our joys. This openness builds trust, accountability, and a deeper sense of community, creating an environment where healing and breakthroughs can occur.
- 3. Becoming a Prayer Warrior for Others:** As you grow in recovery, you'll often find yourself praying for those just starting out. Like Nehemiah, whose prayers moved the heart of a king, your prayers can become a powerful force for change, inviting God's favor and provision into the lives of others.

Developing a Resilient Prayer Life

So, how do we develop a strong prayer life? Here are some practical steps:

- 1. Create time and space for prayer:** Just like Nehemiah sat down to pray, we must intentionally set aside time for prayer. It doesn't have to be hours — even a few focused minutes can make a difference.
- 2. Pray Scripture:** God's Word is powerful. Try praying Bible verses and personalizing them for your situation.
- 3. Use different methods:** Prayer doesn't always have to look the same. You might write your prayers in a journal, go for a prayer walk, or even draw or paint your prayers.

4. **Pray in secret:** Remember Jesus' words about praying in your "room". Find a quiet place where you can be alone with God.
5. **Listen:** Prayer is a two-way conversation. Take time to be still and listen for God's voice. Sometimes, He speaks in a gentle whisper, like He did with Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13).
6. **Join a prayer group:** Engaging with others in prayer builds a supportive community where you can share burdens, celebrate victories, and grow together in faith. These groups can help deepen your relationship with God and encourage accountability.
7. **Experience the power of collective prayer:** When believers come together to pray, they amplify their voices and hearts before God. This communal approach inspires unity and creates a powerful atmosphere where the Holy Spirit can move, encouraging personal and communal transformation.



As we develop our prayer life, don't forget the importance of stillness and quiet. Our fast-paced, noisy world is constantly bombarded by voices, sounds, and distractions. This cacophony can make it challenging to hear God's voice, even when we're actively trying to pray.

To truly deepen our connection with God through prayer, we need to create space for silence. This might mean finding a quiet physical space but also quieting our minds and hearts. Just as God spoke to Elijah not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11-13), He often speaks to us in the moments of calm we create.

Consider setting aside time each day to step away from the noise of life. Turn off your phone, find a quiet corner, and be still in God's presence. As you practice this, you may find it easier to hear God's gentle whisper guiding you, comforting you, and strengthening you for your journey of recovery.

Remember, prayer isn't just about speaking to God, but also about listening for His voice. By intentionally making room for quiet in your prayer life, you open yourself up to deeper communion with God and a greater awareness of His presence in your daily life.



Break in the Journey



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

- Prayer takes intentionality—setting aside time and space, even just a few focused minutes. What practical step could you take this week to create more intentional space for prayer in your daily routine?
- God often speaks in a "gentle whisper," not in noise or distraction. What gets in the way of you hearing God's voice? How can you quiet your heart and mind to listen more closely?
- Joining with others in prayer builds unity and strength. How has praying with others encouraged or strengthened your faith? Who could you begin to pray with more consistently?

Praying Through Tears: Sacred Prayer That Stirs God's Heart for Restoration

There is a sacred place in our lives for allowing ourselves to be broken and anguished over the things we long for God to restore. Perhaps it's your own life, or a relationship that seems shattered beyond repair by sin. Psalm 126 reminds us that God responds powerfully when we pray and sow in tears.

In verse 4, the psalmist pleads, *"Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev."* Just as dry, desert land can be renewed by flowing waters, so can broken places in our lives be restored by God's hand. Are there areas in your life today that feel too desolate to be renewed? The psalmist's cry shows that no place is beyond the reach of God's restoration.

Verses 5 and 6 offer a beautiful promise: *"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."* Like a farmer who plants seeds in hope, even in the midst of tears, we are assured that what we sow in anguish will eventually produce a harvest of joy. Never underestimate the power of pouring out your heart before God. His promise is clear—your weeping will give way to rejoicing, and your cries of desperation will turn into songs of joy.

It's important to recognize the power of praying together as a community. When we gather together as the Body of Christ to cry out for the broken places in our lives and the lives of others, God moves in mighty ways. He not only hears individual cries but moves mightily through unified, collective prayer. Did you know that the early church grew in boldness and strength through consistent communal prayer? As we lift each other's burdens in prayer, we experience the healing and restoration that comes when we bear one another's burdens before God. The harvest of joy is personal and shared in the community of believers.



Overcoming Challenges in Prayer

Let's be honest — prayer isn't always easy. Sometimes we get distracted. Sometimes, it feels like God is silent. Sometimes we don't know what to say. If you're facing challenges in prayer, you're not alone.

When it comes to prayer, there are a few key things to keep in mind as you develop your practice. First and foremost, remember that persistence matters. Jesus illustrated this in His parable about a widow who repeatedly approached a judge seeking justice. Despite initial rejections, her persistence eventually paid off (Luke 18:1-8). We shouldn't give up even if we don't see immediate results in our prayer life. God's timing isn't always our timing, but He is always listening. Sometimes, what we really need is to come to God with open hands, be still, and be at peace in His presence.

Jim Cymbala highlights the power of persevering in prayer:

“Persistent calling upon the name of the Lord breaks through every stronghold of the devil, for nothing is impossible with God. For Christians in these troubled times, there is simply no other way.”

As you persist in prayer, you can be completely honest and open. God already knows what's in your heart, so there's no need to put on a facade or use flowery language. You can be honest with Him about your struggles, doubts, and frustrations. In fact, some of the most powerful prayers in the Bible are brutally honest cries to God. Take a look at one of David's prayers in Psalm 13:

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?”

Or this one from Psalm 22:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.”

Sometimes, we feel like this, and that's okay! God could handle David's emotions, and God can handle yours. In fact, He wants you to come to Him with everything you have in your heart — both the good and the bad.

Then, there are moments when you're not sure what to pray. Even when you feel at a loss for words, take comfort in knowing that the Holy Spirit is there to help. As Romans 8:26 tells us, *“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”* When we don't know how to pray or what to say, the Holy Spirit steps in, bridging the gap between our limited understanding and God's infinite wisdom.



In *Divine Intercessor*, Gary Wilkerson observes, “Can you imagine how the Lord feels when you give Him just tokens of your time—at your convenience? Tragically, sometimes we don’t even give Him that. We pay more attention to sports news or current events reports on the radio than we do to Him. It is so easy to allow the world to claim all your time. The lover of your soul covets time alone with you. The Bible says that God is a jealous God. He is jealous of your time, your love, your affection, your intimacy, and your zeal. ‘You are my beloved, and I am yours. Come away with me,’ the Scripture says in the Song of Solomon.” This reminder calls us to prioritize our relationship with God and to recognize the depth of His desire for intimacy with us, urging us to seek Him wholeheartedly in our prayer lives.

Ultimately, consistent prayer, even when it’s challenging, is part of building a strong spiritual foundation. Jesus speaks about this in Matthew 7:24-29, comparing those who hear and obey His teachings to a wise man who builds his house on rock. By maintaining a steady prayer life, we’re constructing our spiritual lives on solid ground, enabling us to weather the storms of life with greater resilience and faith.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Are you a part of a Godly praying community now? If not, what steps can you take to involve yourself in one?
- How does Nehemiah’s example of persistent prayer inspire you? In what areas of your life do you need to be more persistent in prayer?
- Discuss a time when you felt uncomfortable being honest with God in prayer. How did you overcome this, or how might you in the future?
- How can we support and encourage each other to grow stronger in prayer as a community?
- In what ways has prayer helped you in your battle against temptation and addiction?

Prayer and Spiritual Warfare

Recovery is a physical, emotional, and spiritual battle. That's where prayer becomes a powerful weapon. The Apostle Paul talks about the "armor of God" in Ephesians 6:10-20, and he concludes by urging believers to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."

Let's break down this armor and see how it relates to prayer:

- 1. The Belt of Truth:** Prayer helps us stay grounded in God's truth.
- 2. The Breastplate of Righteousness:** Through prayer our hearts stay aligned with God and guarded against sin and deception.
- 3. Feet Fitted with the Readiness of the Gospel:** Prayer prepares us to share God's love with others.
- 4. The Shield of Faith:** Prayer strengthens our faith to deflect the enemy's attacks.
- 5. The Helmet of Salvation:** Prayer reminds us of our secure position in Christ.
- 6. The Sword of the Spirit (God's Word):** Prayer and Scripture work hand-in-hand as powerful spiritual weapons.

Prayer is our direct line to God's power and protection. When we feel tempted or attacked, we can call on God for help. We're not fighting alone. We have the Creator of the universe on our side!

In his book *Prayer is Invading the Impossible*, Jack Hayford underscores the forceful nature of prayer in spiritual warfare: "Prayer was a matter of assault, of binding, of warfare, of invasion. On earthside, He taught, things may appear impossible, yet, from the heaven side of things, there is a violence that can explode the impossible. But it needs troops for the invasion." When put in this perspective, our prayers become active participation in God's work.

Intercessory prayer — praying for others — is also an essential part of spiritual warfare. As Oswald Chambers said, "Intercession means that we rouse ourselves up to get the mind of Christ about the one for whom we pray." When we pray for others, we join God's work of redemption and healing.



Dale Oquist once said,

*Could it be the reason many who follow Jesus don't diligently seek God is because they don't believe they are accomplishing anything when they pray? The truth that has changed my perspective and motivation on prayer came from Dick Eastman's book, *The University of the Word*. The idea was that something happens when I pray that doesn't happen if I don't. Therefore, if I fail to pray today, something will go undone in God's Kingdom plans for me and those I am praying for. When I engage God in prayer, it ignites His Kingdom plans to be accomplished! Prayer initiates the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit.*

Megan's Story

Megan Delgado struggled with addiction for years, feeling hopeless and unworthy. Even after completing Teen Challenge, she found it hard to stay clean. But everything changed when she truly embraced the power of prayer.

She recalls a turning point when someone told her, "If you truly believed in the power of prayer, you'd be on your knees every single day, praying that the Lord would relieve you of these cravings." This struck a chord with Megan.

She began writing prayers in her journal and reading them aloud throughout the day. She prayed persistently, focusing on freedom from addiction and God's purpose for her life. And God answered in a miraculous way.



Megan's addiction led to multiple arrests, landing her in jail time and time again.



If you truly believed in the power of prayer, you'd be on your knees every single day, praying that the Lord would relieve you of these cravings.

Megan remembers the day she realized she hadn't craved drugs at all — something that had never happened before. Days turned into weeks, and weeks into years. Megan has been clean for over eight years and is still free from the cravings that once controlled her life. Praise God!

Megan's story shows us that prayer is a powerful tool for real, lasting change. It reminds us that no matter how hopeless our situation might seem, God is able to do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20).

Stepping into a Life Empowered by Prayer

Prayer is a journey – one that can lead us into a deeper relationship with God and profound personal transformation. Prayer has the power to change our lives, our circumstances, and even the world around us.

It's not about perfection or using the right words. It's about coming honestly before God, sharing our hearts, and being open to His work in our lives. As Jeremiah 33:3 says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

Whether you're just starting to explore prayer or you've been praying for years, there's always more to discover. God is inviting you into a deeper prayer life — one that can bring freedom, healing, and purpose.

As Cătalin Baci, Director of Teen Challenge Romania, reminds us:

Spiritual authority comes from prayer. There is a strong connection between people who carry authority and their vibrant prayer life.

So let's commit to this journey of prayer. Let's call out to God, believing He hears us and works in ways we can't even imagine. As we do, we'll find ourselves experiencing the supernatural power of God in our lives, bringing transformation, hope, and a deep sense of purpose.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- How do you typically listen for God's voice in prayer? What methods might you try to improve your listening?
- What aspect of Megan's story resonated with you the most? How might her experience inspire your own prayer life?
- Are there specific areas of your life where you need to invite God's supernatural power through prayer? How can you start doing this today?
- How has this chapter changed your perspective on prayer? What is one new practice you want to implement in your prayer life?



Verses to Reflect On This Week

- "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)
- "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:19-20 (NIV)
- "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)
- "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)
- "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Philippians 4:6 (NIV)
- "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." 1 John 5:14 (NIV)
- "Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you." Jeremiah 29:12 (NIV)
- "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Romans 12:12 (NIV)
- "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." Colossians 4:2 (NIV)
- "The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth." Psalm 145:18 (NIV)
- "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms," Ephesians 1:18-20 (NIV)
- "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you." Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)
- "The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer." Psalm 6:9 (NIV)
- "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2 (NIV)
- "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." Psalm 32:7 (NIV)



Everyone who belongs to Christ
will be given *new life*.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:22

