

Chapter 8:

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT: THE PATH TO LASTING FREEDOM



A NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CURRICULUM SERIES

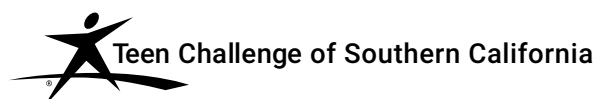


A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



Chapter 8:
**WALKING IN THE SPIRIT:
THE PATH TO LASTING FREEDOM**

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Chapter 8:

Walking in the Spirit: The Path to Lasting Freedom

“And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.”

Romans 8:2 NLT

Addiction can feel like being locked in a prison where we’ve lost the key—and maybe even lost hope that freedom is possible. *“In the worst moments of my life, I was so addicted to OxyContin that I couldn’t function without it. I felt trapped, absolutely trapped. I had no idea how to get out.”* These words from James Force capture a reality many of us know too well.

Have you ever felt stuck in a cycle that seemed impossible to break? Like no matter how hard you tried, you kept falling back into the same patterns? This is a common experience for many of us as we battle addiction. But there’s hope! God has provided the ultimate power source for transformation: His Holy Spirit.

Understanding Our Helper

The Holy Spirit is a person, the third member of the Trinity, sent by God to be our Helper and Guide. In the New Testament, Jesus describes Him using the Greek word *Parakletos*, meaning “one called alongside to help.” English translations capture different aspects of the Spirit’s role in our lives:

- **Advocate** – He defends and represents us.
- **Comforter** – He brings peace in our struggles.
- **Counselor** – He gives wisdom and guidance.
- **Helper** – He supports us in our weaknesses.





The Spirit works in numerous and powerful ways. First, He convicts us of sin — not to condemn, but to guide us toward transformation and holiness. Through His power, He also gives us spiritual gifts, equipping us to play our part in God’s kingdom. The Spirit is the one who brings new birth, making us new creations in Christ and giving us an entirely new identity. He’s our divine teacher, revealing God’s truth and transforming how we see the world. And He empowers us to share our stories of what He’s done in our lives, making us witnesses to others who are still searching.

Jesus made a bold statement to His disciples: *“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you”* (John 16:7). Imagine that: Jesus said having the Spirit with us is even better than having Him physically present! The Spirit’s presence is about more than power; it’s about a personal, close relationship with God.

When we’re filled with the Spirit, He begins to produce His fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). This supernatural transformation goes far deeper than behavior or trying to be a better version of ourselves.

Here are some truths to remember about the Spirit’s work:

- **He is Jehovah Mekoddishkem:** “The LORD Who Sanctifies You” (Exodus 31:13).
- **He makes us holy and whole.** His ongoing grace shapes us daily.
- **He gives us strength to overcome,** allowing us to resist temptation and live in freedom.
- **He guides us into all truth** and helps us know Jesus more fully.

A.W. Tozer once said,



Most Christians don’t hear God’s voice because we’ve already decided we aren’t going to do what He says.

The Spirit speaks, but are we willing to listen? Often, we resist because we're afraid of what He might ask us to surrender. But His guidance is always toward freedom and life.

The power of the Spirit is the same power that raised Christ from the dead (Romans 8:11). There's no addiction too strong, no wound too deep, and no habit too ingrained for Him to heal and transform. He is God's presence living in us, making the impossible possible.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Which aspect of the Holy Spirit's role (Advocate, Comforter, Counselor, Helper) do you most need right now?
- How have you experienced the Holy Spirit's guidance in your life?
- What might be blocking you from hearing the Spirit's voice?
- Have you ever felt trapped in a cycle or pattern, like addiction or another struggle, where freedom seemed impossible? Reflect on what that experience felt like, and consider how that might affect your perspective on God's promise of freedom.
- Are you willing to listen to the Holy Spirit's voice, even if it requires letting go of something that feels secure but may be holding you back? Think about A.W. Tozer's insight—are there areas in your life where you resist surrendering control, and how might releasing that control open a path to transformation?



Break in the Journey



Our Need for the Holy Spirit

Paul's confession in Romans 7 and 8 perfectly captures the struggle many of us know all too well. His words echo the cycle of defeat we experience when faced with our own broken nature and tendency to wander into sinful and destructive habits.

He starts with a moment of painful honesty: *"For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing"* (Romans 7:19). How many times have we been here? We tell ourselves things will be different; we're determined to stay clean, make better choices, and break free from those same destructive cycles. But somehow, we slip back into the very patterns we swore we would leave behind.

In this place of defeat, Paul cries out what so many of us have felt in our darkest hours: *"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?"* (Romans 7:24). It's a desperate admission—we can't break free on our own.

Then comes a turning point. When all seems lost, Paul declares, *"Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Romans 7:25). The freedom we long for doesn't come from our own willpower or determination; it comes through Jesus.

This moment leads to one of the most freeing promises in the Bible: *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). Outside of Christ, there's condemnation—the heavy weight of our failures and shame. But in Christ? There's no condemnation. Not a trace. Shame, guilt, self-hatred—all of it replaced with His love and acceptance.

Finally, Paul shares the key to true freedom: *"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death"* (Romans 8:2). This isn't just forgiveness; it's transformation. The patterns that once held us captive start to lose their grip when we begin to walk in the Spirit, relying on His power instead of our own.



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

- Which part of Paul's progression (struggle, desperation, rescue, freedom) most resonates with your current experience?
- How does understanding "no condemnation in Christ" change how you view your recovery journey?
- What does it mean to you that the Holy Spirit can set you free from the "law of sin and death"?
- Can you relate to Paul's struggle of wanting to do good but feeling drawn back to old patterns? Reflect on any areas in your life where you feel caught in a cycle and have struggled to make lasting change. How does Paul's honesty resonate with your own experiences?
- What does it mean to you to "walk in the Spirit" rather than relying on your own strength? Consider how relying on the Spirit's guidance and power could help you break free from destructive habits. Are there specific ways you feel called to lean on the Spirit more deeply in your daily life?



Break in the Journey



The Power to Transform

The transformation we seek isn't found in our own strength or willpower. It comes through the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. Jesus himself said something remarkable in John 16:7:

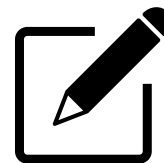
“It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

Think about that: Jesus said it was better for us to have the Holy Spirit than to have Him physically present! This shows us just how crucial the Holy Spirit's role is in our lives.

But it gets even more extraordinary. Romans 8:11 tells us that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. Let that sink in for a moment. The power that conquered death itself — that breathed life back into Jesus' crucified body - that same power dwells in you right now. When we truly grasp this truth, it changes how we view our struggles with addiction and bondage. If the Spirit's power was enough to overcome death, imagine the transformation and victory He can bring into your life when you say yes to His leading.

This isn't just about behavior modification or trying harder. It's about tapping into a supernatural power source. When we lean into the Spirit's power, what seemed impossible becomes possible. Patterns that felt unbreakable can be shattered, and addictions that seemed unconquerable can be overcome. The Spirit doesn't just help us manage our problems—He transforms us from the inside out.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- When have you experienced the frustration Paul describes in Romans 7:18-19, wanting to do right but feeling unable to follow through?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus said having the Holy Spirit was better than having Him physically present?
- In what areas of your life do you most need the Holy Spirit's transforming power right now?

Breaking Free From Bondage

Sometimes, God's rescue comes wrapped in the last thing we'd expect—like a pair of handcuffs. For Nolan, that cold metal locked around his wrists in a Fresno police car again wasn't the end he thought it was. It was the start of something he hadn't dared to hope for: freedom. At the time, though, he couldn't see it. It felt like his life had hit rock bottom. But looking back now, he sees how God worked through circumstances he'd never have chosen. *"He redeems. He saves. And He restores,"* Nolan says with conviction, speaking of the journey that took him to places he never imagined.

Addiction had been part of Nolan's life for so long that he'd given up trying to quit. *"I couldn't get clean,"* he remembers. *"No matter how hard I wanted it. I just couldn't. Ever."* Heroin and meth had wrapped themselves around his life so tightly that they felt like part of him. *"The claws of the drugs were buried so deep in my identity, and the roots of addiction had overtaken every part of who I was, that to imagine my life free of them seemed impossible."*

The detox process was brutal, what he calls *"the closest thing to hell."* But in those dark days, Jesus showed up in ways he never expected. **"Jesus Christ loves the addict,"** he says simply, *"and He's the only one who can truly set someone free."* God didn't just give him a way out of drugs—He met him right there in the middle of the mess, bringing hope into a life that had felt beyond hope for so long.

Now, Nolan's life is proof of what Jesus can do, even in the lives that seem furthest gone. *"Jesus did for me what I thought was impossible. He brought lasting sobriety. A new life."* Where there was once only desperation, he's now found purpose. Through Teen Challenge, Nolan's life transformed in ways he couldn't have imagined. He realized, *"Where you are now doesn't have to be where you end up."* Day by day, God was rebuilding him, healing the damage, and giving him a new identity, one that wasn't defined by addiction.



“God still does miracles. He still does the impossible. I’ve seen Him do it with my own eyes,”

Nolan says. For anyone trapped in addiction, he has one message: no situation is beyond God’s reach. The addiction that once destroyed him? God’s still in the process of restoring every part of it.

Ron Brown explains it this way,

“It is the power of God’s Spirit on flesh that breaks all the stuff that you’ve been boxing shadows in the night trying to get rid of... The anointing is the power of God to deliver people and set captives free. The anointing is God-on-flesh doing what flesh cannot do.”

This truth leads us to examine what we might call the “pharaohs” of our hearts: those ruling forces that, like the Egyptian Pharaoh who enslaved Israel, keep us in bondage through their oppressive control.

These internal tyrants might be substances that promised relief but delivered chains, relationships that offered love but brought manipulation, or beliefs about ourselves that keep us trapped in shame and fear. Like the historical Pharaoh, they don’t release their grip easily, demanding more while giving less, disguising their oppression as protection or comfort. But just as God delivered Israel with a mighty hand, His Spirit has the power to dethrone these pharaohs in our hearts.

This same power to break free is available to everyone. Isaiah 10:27 says, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.”

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- How does Nolan’s story encourage you in your own journey?
- What are the “pharaohs” currently ruling in your heart that you need God to dethrone?
- What yokes do you need the Spirit’s anointing to break in your life?

Living in the Spirit's Power

Living in the Spirit's power is all about surrendering more fully. As John Owen said, *"Do not seek to empty your cup as a way to avoid sin, but rather seek to fill it up with the Spirit of life, so there is no longer room for sin."*

Galatians 5:16 puts it this way: *"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."* When we're filled with the Spirit, we naturally produce His fruit: *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"* (Galatians 5:22-23).

Merina's journey to healing took a big turn one day in the Teen Challenge chapel. She stood there, holding back from raising her hands in worship, feeling the weight of her past. All those regrets, those mistakes—they felt heavy, like they were pulling her down. But despite her fears, she chose to surrender and lift her hands. In that moment, God gave her a vision that changed everything.

"I've always dreamed of a gentleman who'd lay down his coat so I could walk over it,"

she remembers. It was her idea of the ultimate kindness. And then, in that quiet moment, Jesus spoke to her heart: *"This is my coat of righteousness. I put it over the puddles of your sins so that you can walk over it."* This image sank deep into her soul. It wasn't just forgiveness—there was a gentleness in it, the kind of love and acceptance she had always longed for.

That vision sparked something new in Merina. She realized that the love she'd been looking for in family, friends, and relationships had been right here with God all along. *"From that moment on, I just fell so in love with Him because this is everything I wanted of love,"* she says. It was like finding the missing piece, and for the first time, she felt truly at home, a part of God's family.

Ephesians 1:4 became a promise she held close: *"He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."* Knowing she was chosen, not abandoned, gave her a new sense of belonging and peace. Now, she walks in that truth daily, grateful that the Creator of the universe calls her cherished and loved.

The Spirit does this: He helps us see Jesus more clearly and empowers us to walk in freedom. As Paul writes in Romans 8:11, *"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you."*



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

- What does it practically mean to “walk by the Spirit” in your daily life?
- How have you seen the fruit of the Spirit developing in your life?
- What areas of surrender is the Spirit asking of you right now?
- **Read Ephesians 1 each day this week, and consider what it means to be chosen, loved, and redeemed by God. How does knowing that you are “blessed with every spiritual blessing” and “sealed with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:3, 13) shape the way you see yourself and your purpose? Reflect on how these truths could impact your perspective, choices, and relationships this week.**



Break in the Journey

Guarding Against the Enemy's Schemes

The Spirit empowers us to live in freedom, but we must stay alert. The enemy is always looking for a way back in, and when we allow him space through our attitudes and actions, we make it easier for him to build strongholds in our lives.

The devil often finds footholds in places like:

- Complaining and grumbling
- Bitterness and unforgiveness
- Guilt and shame
- Hidden sin that seems harmless

These attitudes become breeding grounds for ungratefulness and resentment, tying us to past hurts and regrets. The enemy uses these strongholds to keep us weighed down, making it hard to walk in the freedom God offers. So, we must stay watchful, guarding our hearts and lives against places where he tries to settle.



Sometimes, sin can feel asymptomatic, like it's not doing any harm. This is one of the enemy's most subtle tricks. Sin always has consequences, even those "little" sins we think are hidden. Sin isn't something we can keep under control—it's relentless and destructive. What starts small can take everything, leaving us with nothing.

As the old British preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said, *"You will never make yourself feel that you are a sinner because there is a mechanism in you as a result of sin that will always be defending you against every accusation."* It's like having an illness where one of the symptoms is that we feel fine.

By choosing gratitude over complaining, forgiveness over bitterness, and bringing hidden things into the light, we help close doors the enemy wants to enter. This takes daily vigilance and reliance on the Spirit's power. As 1 Peter 5:8 warns, *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Where do you see the enemy trying to "camp out" in your life?
- How can you better guard against attitudes of complaining and bitterness?
- What "hidden sins" might you be minimizing in your life?



Break in the Journey





Walking in Freedom

The journey to freedom is a daily walk empowered by the Spirit. Joel 2:25 promises, “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.” God not only frees us but restores what addiction has stolen.

Remember these truths:

- Jesus’ sacrifice covers all sin — past, present, and future (Hebrews 7:27, 10:10)
- Your old self is crucified with Christ (Romans 6)
- The Spirit’s resurrection power lives in you (Romans 8:11)
- Victory comes through His strength, not yours (Zechariah 4:6)

As John Eldredge reminds us:



The Big Lie in the church today is that you are nothing more than a sinner saved by grace. You are a lot more than that. You are a new creation in Christ ... The battle is not between us and God; no, there is a traitor within who wars against our true heart, fighting alongside the Spirit of God in us.

While the Holy Spirit empowers us individually, God designed us to walk out this freedom in community. As Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 reminds us, “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”

Godly community provides several essential elements for our walk in the Spirit:

- **Accountability** when temptation comes
- **Encouragement** when the journey feels overwhelming
- **Wisdom** from those who’ve walked this path before
- **Prayer** support during vulnerable times
- **Practical help** in moments of crisis

Even Jesus sent His disciples two by two—never alone. This pattern continues throughout Scripture, showing us that living in the Spirit’s power isn’t meant to be a solitary journey. When we isolate ourselves, we become vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks. But in a healthy Christian community, we find strength, support, and the encouragement we need to keep walking in freedom.

As we close this chapter, let's pray together:

Lord Jesus, You are the Anointed One. I come before You acknowledging the "pharaohs" in my heart — those ruling forces that have kept me enslaved:

- *Substances that promised relief but brought bondage*
- *Relationships that pulled me away from Your purpose*
- *Beliefs that kept me trapped in destructive patterns*
- *Habits that seemed harmless but stole my freedom*

Today, by the power of Your Spirit, I declare Isaiah 10:27 over my life: "The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing." Just as You delivered Israel from Pharaoh, deliver me from everything that has enslaved me.

I bring to You all of my past, all of my present, and all of my hopes for the future. **Take my thoughts, Lord, and cause them to be still, that I may know You are God.**

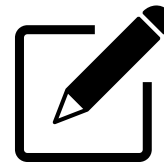
I receive Your anointing to break every yoke, destroy every chain, remove every burden, and restore every loss.

Holy Spirit, come. Give me Your ability, give me Your authority, that I may stand firm as Your child.

Though this journey may require me to die to myself, I declare with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him" (Job 13:15). I trust Your process of transformation, knowing that true freedom comes only through You.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What areas of your life need restoration after addiction's destruction?
- How can you better rely on God's strength rather than your own?
- What does being "a new creation in Christ" mean to you?
- In what ways have you struggled to believe that freedom is possible in areas where you've felt bound for a long time?
- How does the idea of God meeting you "in the middle of the mess" resonate with your own journey?



Verses to Reflect on This Week

- “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:2 (ESV)
- “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16 (ESV)
- “And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.” Isaiah 10:27 (KJV)
- “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.” Joel 2:25 (ESV)
- “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” John 16:7 (ESV)
- “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.” Job 13:15 (NIV)
- “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Romans 8:13 (NIV)
- “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)
- “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 (ESV)
- “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6 (ESV)
- “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9 (ESV)
- “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.” Ephesians 1:4-5 (NIV)



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

1 CORINTHIANS 15:22

