



LEADER'S GUIDE

**SHEPHERDING LIVES OUT OF ADDICTION
AND INTO *new life* IN CHRIST**

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New Life Community Leader's Guide

Shepherding Lives Toward New Life in Christ

Introduction

Welcome to the *New Life Community Leader's Guide*. This guide is designed to equip you, the leader, to walk alongside individuals on their journey toward healing, restoration, and a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ. Rooted in 2 Corinthians 5:17, which declares, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come,” this curriculum is a Spirit-led invitation into transformation.

The Leader's Guide provides a clear structure, a Spirit-filled tone, and practical tools for leading a New Life Community group effectively. Whether you are leading in a church, recovery group, or community outreach setting, this resource will help you shepherd others with compassion, boldness, and grace.

As a leader in New Life Community, you are stepping into the role of a shepherd—one who reflects the heart of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Just as He left the ninety-nine to go after the one lost sheep, you are called to notice, pursue, and walk with those who are wandering, hurting, or on the verge of giving up. This is not just about running a group or leading a discussion—it's about shepherding lives toward new life in Christ. It's about being present in people's mess, praying through their breakthroughs, and never giving up on the one who hasn't yet seen their worth in God's eyes. You're not just holding a meeting—you're leading souls home.

Our prayer is that this guide equips you to be more than a facilitator. You are a shepherd—a leader entrusted with guiding broken, hurting, and searching people toward freedom in Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, lives can change today, and every day, along this journey.

Above all, remember this truth: **The Gospel is the only way that someone's life is truly going to change.** Real transformation begins in the heart and **true freedom is only found in Jesus Christ.** Everything we do in this group—every discussion, prayer, and moment of worship—is meant to point people back to Him.

Vision & Purpose of the Leader's Guide

New Life Community is a transformative nine-chapter journey designed to equip local churches, recovery groups, and like-minded ministries with Christ-centered teachings and video content rooted in the DNA of Teen Challenge. This powerful initiative empowers leaders to walk alongside individuals on their path to freedom and restoration, guiding them toward lasting transformation through the Gospel.

At the core of this curriculum is the Gospel's ability to heal broken lives and renew hope. Each chapter serves as a stepping stone on the journey to wholeness, exploring life-transforming truths such as:

- **Finding New Life When You've Lost Yourself**
- **It's Never too Late to Come Home**
- **The Power of the Blood: Silencing Accusations and Breaking Free from the Past**
- **Praying With Purpose: Unleashing the Supernatural Power of God in Our Lives**
- **Designed for Devotion: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Worship**
- **From Brokenness to Restoration: Trusting God to Heal Your Deepest Hurts**
- **When the Storm Rages: Waiting for the Whisper of God**
- **Walking in the Spirit: The Path to Lasting Freedom**
- **Made for More: Stepping into the New Life God has for You**

Every chapter is infused with God's Word, real-life stories from Teen Challenge alumni, and personal reflection questions. These elements inspire participants to believe for a miracle in their own lives. Group discussions and weekly scripture meditations provide key moments of reflection along this transformative journey, fostering a deep connection to God and community. Leading people into a lifelong relationship with Christ is the bedrock of this curriculum, ensuring that transformation is not just temporary but eternal.

Within every chapter, you'll see " **II Break in the Journey**" markers. These suggested pause points help create space for prayer, reflection, and application before your next gathering.

Program Overview & Structure

New Life Community is a flexible, ongoing discipleship journey built around nine transformative chapters. Each chapter is Christ-centered, Gospel-driven, and intentionally designed to help people encounter Jesus and experience true freedom. Churches and ministries are encouraged to run New Life Community year-round, allowing new participants to join at any point.

Group Format & Core Elements:

Every New Life Community gathering may look different depending on the setting, but we recommend the following core components be present in every session:

- **Prayer** – Begin and end each gathering with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to lead.
- **Praise & Worship** – Create an atmosphere of surrender and reverence with simple, heartfelt worship.
- **Show a Teen Challenge transformation story video** – Find powerful testimonies to share with your group at newlifetc.org/videos.
- **Evangelistic Message & Salvation Invitation** – Present the Gospel clearly and offer an opportunity to receive Christ.
- **Group Discussions** – Separate men's and women's group time creates safe spaces for deeper sharing and connection.

Suggested Weekly Ministry Night Flow:

- **6:00 PM – Leader Meeting:** A time of fellowship, encouragement, equipping, and prayer for all group leaders. Includes brief training, leadership development, and spiritual encouragement.
- **6:30 PM – Large Group Gathering:** All participants and leaders come together for worship, announcements, a short teaching or a testimony. This moment sets the tone for the evening and points everyone toward Christ.
- **7:30 PM – Small Group Breakouts:**
 - Men and women separate into gender-specific small groups
 - Each group is led by a trained leader
 - Group members reflect on and discuss that week's chapter content
 - The focus is on sharing, prayer, accountability, and applying the truths from the curriculum to their own lives

During small group time, leaders are not teaching a lesson or delivering training. Instead, they are shepherding each participant through the week's chapter—unpacking the spiritual truths, discussing the personal reflections, and helping individuals hear from God for themselves. **Leaders must remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings throughout the gathering, creating space for ministry, prayer, and unexpected moments of breakthrough.**

- **8:30 PM – Fellowship Time:** Casual hangout space for connection, coffee, and community. These moments often foster relationships and deepen trust within the group.

Flexible Pacing:

While the curriculum contains nine chapters, each group can move at the pace that best fits their journey. The structure is flexible to the needs of your church or ministry. Transformation is not rushed; it is walked out.

Open Enrollment:

New Life Community is designed so that individuals can join at any point in the cycle. Each lesson stands on its own while building toward the full picture of freedom in Christ.

Leadership Expectations:

Group Leaders are:

- **Shepherds of the broken** – leading people with love, humility, and spiritual authority.
- **Full of faith and the Holy Spirit** – ready to minister, pray, and lead others to Christ at any moment.
- **Focused on lasting transformation** – guiding others not just through curriculum, but into lifelong discipleship and service within the local church.

Our vision is not only for participants to experience healing, but to rise up as future leaders—serving in ministry and using their gifts to build the body of Christ.



Leading Someone to Christ: A Shepherd's Roadmap

*"All of heaven rejoices when one sinner repents."
Luke 15:7*

As a leader, be ready. You are a shepherd and watchman, and your highest calling is to point others to Jesus. Whether in a group setting or one-on-one, remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading.

Go as you pray, and pray as you go.

Infusing the Heart of Soul Winning (J. Oswald Sanders)

1. Know the Value of a Soul

"But how can we compute the value of a soul?" — J. Oswald Sanders, *The Divine Art of Soul Winning*

- Its Nature and Origin: Made in God's image (Genesis 1:27); breathed into by God (Genesis 2:7).
- Its Powers and Capacities: Capable of fellowship with God, yet hijacked by sin (Romans 8:11).
- Its Duration: The soul exists eternally—either in bliss or in woe (Matthew 25:46; 2 Corinthians 4:18).
- Its Redemption Cost: Bought not with silver or gold, but the blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:18–19).
- The Battle for It: A battleground between God and the enemy (Jude 7; 2 Peter 3:6–7).

Let this reality ignite urgency and compassion in your heart.

2. Present the Gospel Clearly

- All have sinned and fall short – Romans 3:23
- Sin earns death; God's gift is life – Romans 6:23
- God's love sent Christ – John 3:16
- Jesus died while we were still sinners – Romans 5:8
- Repent, be baptized, receive the Spirit – Acts 2:38–39
- Confess and believe to be saved – Romans 10:9–10, 13
- Jesus came to save sinners – 1 Timothy 1:15
- Salvation is by grace through faith – Ephesians 2:8–9

3. Invite Response in Faith

After explaining the gospel, lead them in a prayer such as:

"Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You died for my sins and rose again. I confess my need for You. Please forgive me, change me, and come live inside of me by Your Holy Spirit. Today I turn from my old life and follow You as Savior and Lord. Thank You for loving me, saving me, and making me new. In Jesus' name, amen."



4. Explain What Comes Next

- Sealed with the Spirit – Ephesians 1:13–14; 2 Corinthians 1:22.
- Indwelt and Empowered – Romans 8:1; Ephesians 2:10.
- God’s Property and Protected – Ephesians 4:30.

5. Teach Them to Walk as Disciples

“To be a happy Christian, he must confess Christ to men... He must be out and out for God to experience God’s best.” — *J. Oswald Sanders*

- Confess Christ publicly – *Romans 10:9–10*
- Surrender fully – *Matthew 16:24; Galatians 2:20*
- Read the Bible daily – *Ephesians 2:4–5; Romans 6:6*
- Learn to pray – *Matthew 6:6; Hebrews 13:5–6*
- Be filled with the Spirit – *Joel 2:28–29; Matthew 3:11*
- Join community – *Ecclesiastes 4:9–10*
- Begin serving others – *2 Timothy 4:7*

Encourage immediate obedience to Jesus. Teach them that through the Spirit’s power, they are a new creation with a new mission and identity.

Simple Teaching Moments

- God doesn’t just restore; He re-stories.
- Grace finds you where you are, but doesn’t leave you there.
- Sometimes God lets things die to raise something new.
- The road is long, but Jesus walks with you.
- You’re not just forgiven—you’re commissioned.



From New Life to New Purpose: Turning the Hopeless into Givers of Hope

Completing the nine chapters of New Life Community is not the end of the journey—it's only the beginning of a life ignited by purpose, filled with power, and led by the presence of God. What God has begun is not a finish line but a launch point into a Spirit-empowered destiny.

Participants who have experienced freedom and healing are uniquely positioned to walk alongside others who are still hurting. This is the powerful shift—from once being hopeless to becoming a giver of hope. This identity shift is central to the mission of New Life Community. Those who complete the journey should be encouraged to pour out what they've received: compassion, wisdom, and the testimony of God's goodness.

Every participant who completes this journey has the potential to become a lay leader in the group—helping guide others through the same Gospel truths that set them free. Others may step into service in their local church, outreach teams, mentorship roles, or broader ministry opportunities. The goal is to help them:

- Identify their spiritual gifts and callings
- Discover the joy of serving as vital members of the Body of Christ
- Embody the hope of Jesus in their families, churches, and communities

Participants should be encouraged: **don't limit what God can do with your life.** You are not defined by where you've been but by who He says you are. **There is kingdom potential in every story of redemption.** You were rescued to become a rescuer. You were healed to bring healing. You were restored to be a restorer.

This is a call to rise—to become a vessel of transformation, a light in dark places, and a living testimony that Jesus still saves, heals, and sends.

This next season is about multiplication—taking what was received and freely giving it to others. The journey is not just about personal transformation; it's about becoming a vessel of transformation for others.

Leader's Guide: Chapter 1 –

Finding New Life When You've Lost Yourself

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 sets the foundation for the entire New Life Community curriculum, focusing on the powerful truth that real transformation and freedom are possible through Jesus Christ. The chapter addresses the profound loss of identity that addiction and brokenness bring, while presenting the gospel as the key to recovery and renewal. Through Scripture, personal stories, and biblical teaching, participants are invited to embrace a new identity as beloved sons and daughters of God.

The transformation discussed is not surface-level change but a deep, spiritual renewal that unfolds in stages: initial salvation, ongoing sanctification, and future glorification. Anchored in biblical promises and filled with hope, this chapter helps participants recognize that they are not defined by their past but by what Jesus has done for them.

Key Principles

1. **You Are a New Creation in Christ** – 2 Corinthians 5:17
2. **Transformation Is Both Instant and Ongoing** – Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18
3. **You Are Adopted Into God's Family** – Romans 8:15; 1 John 2:12
4. **Your Identity Is Rooted in Christ, Not in Your Addiction or Past** – Colossians 2:7 & 10
5. **Sharing Your Testimony Is Part of the Healing Journey** – Mark 5:19; Luke 8:39

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 1

Step 1: Engage the Story

Start with Ryan's story. Invite group members to reflect on their own story and begin identifying the brokenness and hope in their past.

Step 2: Unpack the Scriptures

Focus on the foundational verses: 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Romans 12:2. Facilitate discussion around these truths and how they reshape identity.

Step 3: Highlight the Three Stages of Transformation

Walk through initial change, sanctification, and ultimate transformation. Help the group identify where they are on this journey.

Step 4: Explore Identity and Adoption

Discuss what it means to be God's child. Use Romans 8:15 and 1 John 2:12 to reflect on God's love and forgiveness.

Step 5: Apply the Teaching

Encourage members to identify one practical step they can take this week to set their minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-3).

Step 6: Share the Hope

Wrap up with Mark 5. Let participants explore how their story, like the healed man's, can bring hope to others.

Simple Teaching Moments

- **New Creation Defined:** Emphasize that “new creation” is not symbolic—it’s a supernatural reality for every believer.
- **Surrender Over Perfection:** Transformation doesn’t require perfection. It starts with honest surrender.
- **Renewing the Mind:** Daily choices matter. What we feed our mind with shapes our future.
- **God’s Power Over Chains:** Like the man in Mark 5, Jesus has the power to break chains no one else can.
- **Testimony as a Tool:** Sharing your story is part of healing and helps others see Jesus clearly.

Additional Group Questions



- In what ways have you seen glimpses of transformation in your life, even if small?
- What lies or labels from your past are hardest for you to let go of?
- How do you personally relate to Ryan’s story? What moments in his journey reflect parts of your own?
- What does it look like for you to renew your mind daily? What habits can support that?
- Who in your life needs to hear your story of transformation?

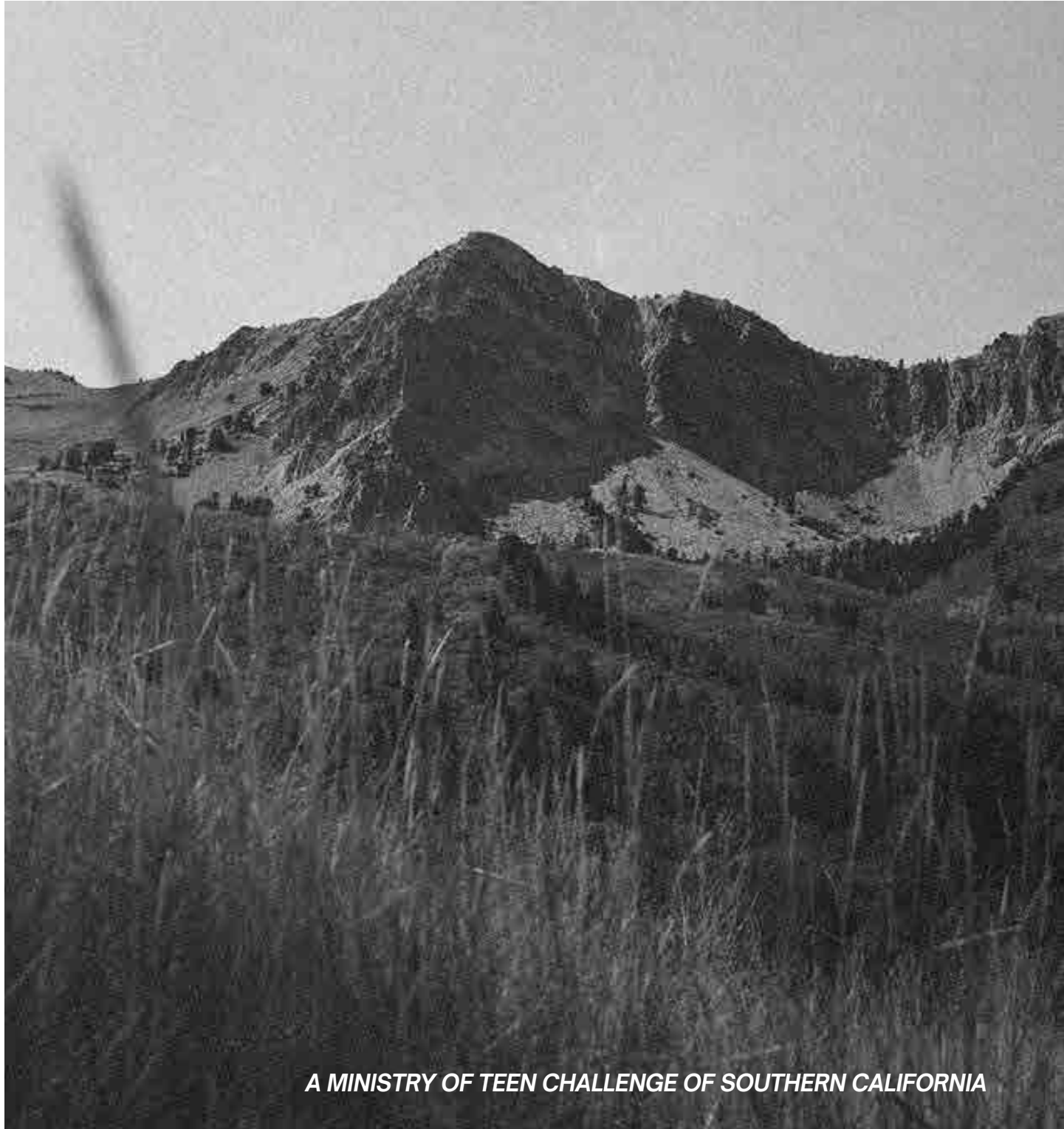
This Leader’s Guide equips you to walk alongside group members as they step into a new identity, discover God’s power to transform, and begin to live from a place of hope and freedom. Remember: each step forward is a victory, and God is faithful to complete the work He has begun (Philippians 1:6).

Chapter 1:

FINDING NEW LIFE WHEN YOU'VE LOST YOURSELF



A NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CURRICULUM SERIES



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Chapter 1:

Finding New Life When You've Lost Yourself

Certainly we cannot claim a magical cure for addiction. The devil which hides in the needle, the pills and the powder, is so deadly strong that any such claim would be foolish. All we can say is that we have found a power that captures a person more strongly than narcotics; but, He captures only to liberate.

—David Wilkerson

Welcome to the first chapter of our journey towards transformation and a new life in Christ. This curriculum is designed to help you find freedom from addiction and discover a life filled with purpose and hope.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”
2 Corinthians 5:17

Addiction can feel like a relentless force, consuming our thoughts, actions, and very identity. It often leaves us feeling lost, hopeless, and disconnected from who we truly are. But there is hope. The message of the Gospel is one of radical transformation: A complete renewal that starts from within and works its way out into every aspect of our lives.

In this chapter, we'll explore what it means to find new life in Christ, especially in the context of overcoming addiction. We'll look at key Scriptures that speak to our identity as new creations, examine the power of God to transform even the most broken areas of our lives, and consider practical steps towards embracing this new life in Jesus.

Remember, this journey is not about perfection, but progress. It's about daily surrendering our old selves and embracing the new life Christ offers. As we begin, let's consider these words from the Apostle Paul:

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
Galatians 2:20

This verse encapsulates the heart of what we'll be exploring: **A life no longer defined by our past or our struggles, but by Christ himself living in and through us.**



As we dive into this material, approach it with an open heart and mind. Be honest with yourself and with God. The path to transformation often begins with acknowledging our need for change and our inability to change on our own. Let's begin this journey together, trusting in the power of God to make all things new.

As we begin, take a moment to reflect on where you are in your journey. What brought you to this point? What are your hopes as you start this community gathering? Remember, no matter where you're starting from, God's power to transform lives is greater than any addiction or struggle we face.

Ryan's Story



Ryan's story began in a place of deep brokenness. *"I started using heroin when I was about 19 years old,"* he recalls. *"In one way, I wanted to escape the reality of who I was and wanted to be someone else."* This longing led him down a dark path of addiction and destruction, leaving him unrecognizable even to himself. *"I remember sitting in a cell around Thanksgiving, thinking, 'What has my life come to?' When I looked in the mirror, I didn't even recognize the guy staring back at me."*

Ryan's mom, a woman of unwavering faith, saw through the facade. One day, she caught him trying to get high before work. Desperate and tearful, she called him and asked, *"Ryan, how do you want me to bury you?"* Her question pierced his heart. Though Ryan continued down his destructive path, he says, *"I*

had a mother who never stopped praying for me. When I think about her prayers and her desire for me to come to know the Lord, I see God's hand in it."

One pivotal moment came when Ryan called his dad and said, *"Hey Dad, I think I'm ready to try something different. I need help."* His dad picked him up the next day and brought him to Teen Challenge, where Ryan encountered something unexpected. *"I realized that Christianity and Jesus were not just a crutch people use, but literally Jesus was a doctor for those who were sick."*

At a Teen Challenge event, Ryan found himself alone on a hillside, reflecting on the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. He knew he didn't want his transformation to be temporary. *"I didn't want this to just be a fad or a season. I wanted to be the good soil that the seed of the Gospel would be planted into and produce fruit in my life."*



I had a mother who never stopped praying for me. When I think about her prayers and her desire for me to come to know the Lord, I see God's hand in it.



From that moment, God began to reshape Ryan's heart and life. "Through violence and frustration and pride, God brought humility, uprightness, and a calm spirit into my life." Little by little, he was led into a life of purpose and ultimately called into full-time ministry.

Ryan's journey from heroin addiction to ministry is a testament to God's transformative power. As he puts it, "God does have a plan and a purpose for your life, and He's going to use it for His kingdom. You might not see it at times, but in the end, you'll realize that God redeemed you for His glory."

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What do you think first led you into addiction or destructive patterns? What part of your life felt broken or empty at that time?
- Have you ever had a moment or conversation that woke you up to how serious your situation was? How did you respond?
- What does taking the first step toward change look like for you right now? Who could you reach out to for help?
- What do you believe God's purpose is for your life? How might your past struggles actually become part of your testimony to help others?
- Who in your life has prayed for you, encouraged you, or believed in you even when you couldn't believe in yourself? How does that impact you today?

The Process of Transformation

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Romans 12:2

Transformation is the profound, holistic change that happens when we surrender our lives to Jesus. It's not merely behavior modification, but a complete renewal of our mind, heart, and spirit. This can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit.

God's power to transform is truly remarkable. He doesn't just patch up our brokenness or temporarily relieve our pain; He completely renews us from the inside out. Where we see chaos and hopelessness, God sees an opportunity for redemption. He takes the shattered pieces of our lives — our failures, our addictions, our deepest wounds — and skillfully crafts them into a beautiful mosaic of purpose and hope. This divine transformation restores our dignity as His beloved children and gives our lives meaning beyond what we could have imagined.

Mike Conway learned the value of having a broken heart before God and allowing Him to be the focus of his life,

“*God loved me enough to let me get to that place where once again I needed a miracle.” What Mike discovered was that, “God doesn’t just save drug addicts and gang members and sinners. He saves Christians too. What I learned was there’s always hope and my Father loves me.*”



"My brokenness doesn't mean something's wrong with me. What I've discovered is that my brokenness is actually an invitation to intimacy with the Father. I don't have to be fixed. I can be broken. And that's okay."

Transformation is both a moment and an ongoing process. God's grace is abundant as we navigate this journey, even when we stumble. Remember, there's no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

This transformative work happens in three stages:

1. Initial Change: The Moment We Accept Christ

This is the pivotal moment of conversion, often referred to as being "born again" (John 3:3). It's a supernatural act of God that causes us to pass from death to life (John 5:24).

Key aspects:

- Justification: We are declared righteous before God (Romans 5:1)
- Regeneration: We receive a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Adoption: We become children of God (Galatians 4:5)
- Indwelling of the Holy Spirit: God's Spirit comes to live in us (1 Corinthians 6:19)

This change is instantaneous and complete in terms of our standing before God. However, it's just the beginning of our journey of transformation.

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"
2 Corinthians 5:17*



2. Ongoing Sanctification: Daily Growth and Change

Sanctification is the lifelong process of becoming more like Christ in our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. It's a collaborative work between us and the Holy Spirit.

What to remember about sanctification:

- It's progressive: It happens over time, not all at once (Philippians 1:6)
- It's active: It requires our participation (Philippians 2:12-13)
- It's holistic: It affects every area of our lives (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
- It's relational: It deepens our relationship with God (John 15:4-5)

This process involves daily choices to surrender to God, resist temptation, renew our minds, and walk in obedience.

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:18

3. Ultimate Transformation: When We See Christ Face to Face

This refers to our final glorification, which occurs when Jesus returns or when we go to be with Him. At this point, our transformation will be complete.

What this means:

- Physical transformation: We'll receive glorified bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)
- Moral perfection: We'll be free from the presence of sin (Revelation 21:27)
- Complete knowledge: We'll know fully, even as we are fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12)
- Eternal communion with God: We'll see God face-to-face (Revelation 22:4)

What a revelation — to be with God for eternity! When you are struggling, broken, in the pit (and maybe that's this very moment), let this image of the future fuel you with the hope and motivation you need to keep going. Our present difficulties are temporary, and God faithfully works towards our ultimate glorification. This eternal perspective can fuel our perseverance in the ongoing process of sanctification.

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”
1 John 3:2

When Christ transforms us, we enter a life filled with meaning, substance, and fulfillment. We discover our true purpose as children of God and members of His family. Not only that, but we become part of the greater body of Christ, connected to believers worldwide and throughout history, each playing a unique role in God’s grand plan of redemption for the whole world.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- In what ways has your identity been shaped by your past struggles or addictions? How does the concept of being a son or daughter of God change your perspective?
- If 2 Corinthians 5:17 is true, what are the implications in your life today?
- The chapter discusses three stages of transformation: initial change, ongoing sanctification, and ultimate transformation. Where do you feel you are in this process, and what challenges are you facing?



Break in the Journey

A New Identity in Christ

Identity is what you believe (or don’t believe) about yourself. It shapes your thoughts, actions, and expectations.

Once you’ve experienced transformation through the work of the Holy Spirit, the truth of your identity is that you are His. Your foundation as a son or daughter of God must be how you build your identity.

“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”
Romans 8:15

Take a moment and consider the profound meaning behind this verse. Paul is introducing us to a revolutionary concept: Our adoption into God’s family. In Roman culture, adopted children were granted the same rights and privileges as biological children. Similarly, God is offering us full status as His children, with all the benefits.



"Abba" is an Aramaic term that Jesus used when addressing God, while "Father" is the Greek equivalent. This combination suggests an intimate, personal relationship with God. It's as if we're being invited to address God in the most familiar and affectionate terms possible.

"I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name."

1 John 2:12

Our forgiveness is not based on our efforts, but on the name and work of Jesus. It's a powerful affirmation of our new identity in Him. As Ron Brown, Executive Director of Teen Challenge of Southern California, points out, *"It's from the place of sonship that we're able to walk into the fullness of God's plan, purpose, and identity."* Our identity as God's children becomes the foundation from which we live out our faith and pursue transformation — you are now forgiven and adopted children of God!

This new identity as God's adopted children transforms our entire approach to faith. We're no longer bound by fear or a sense of unworthiness. Instead, we can confidently approach God, knowing we belong to Him. This understanding of our place in God's family becomes the foundation for our transformed life in Christ. It shapes how we view ourselves, how we relate to God, and how we live out our faith daily.

If you believe that you're always going to be an addict and a broken person, transformation is going to be hard to experience. But if you believe that God calls you His son, His daughter — that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you — then transformation and freedom will come naturally.

[When we become a new creation], the anointing of the Holy Spirit manifests in our lives, and it connects us to our new identity.

—Ron Brown

God can transform every aspect of our lives:

- **Heart:** Our desires and motivations
- **Mind:** Our thoughts and beliefs
- **Life:** Our actions and habits
- **Family:** Our relationships and influence

The key is surrendering each area to God and His Holy Spirit to begin renewing our minds.

The Renewing of Your Mind

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

Colossians 3:1–3

A crucial aspect of your transformation in Christ is the renewal of your mind. This isn't just positive thinking or self-help; it's a fundamental shift in our thought patterns and focus, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

This verse from Colossians challenges us to redirect our focus from earthly concerns to heavenly realities. But what does this mean practically? It involves consciously choosing to dwell on God's truth, His promises, and His character, rather than being consumed by our struggles, fears, or worldly desires.

The process of renewing our minds is transformative, as Romans 12:2 tells us, *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.”*

This transformation isn't superficial; it's a deep, internal change that affects every aspect of our being.

“Without a heart transformed by the grace of Christ, we just continue to manage external and internal darkness.”

—Matt Chandler, The Explicit Gospel

True change comes from within, as God's grace renews our minds and transforms our hearts.

This renewal will require vigilance on your part. Renewing our mind isn't a one-time event, but an ongoing process that requires alertness and honest self-assessment. We must actively resist negative thought patterns, lies from the enemy, and worldly influences that seek to pull us back into old ways of thinking.

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

1 Peter 5:8–9

So, how can God transform our hearts, minds, lives, and families through this process of mental renewal?

- **Heart Transformation:** As we focus on God's love and grace, our desires and motivations begin to align with His.
- **Mind Transformation:** Our thought patterns and beliefs are reshaped by meditating on Scripture and God's truth.
- **Life Transformation:** As our mind is renewed, our actions and habits naturally change, reflecting our new focus on Christ.
- **Family Transformation:** Our renewed mindset impacts our relationships, potentially influencing our family with God's love and truth.

Remember, this renewal is not something we achieve through sheer willpower. It's a collaborative process between us and the Holy Spirit. As we actively set our minds on things above and open ourselves to God's work in us, He faithfully transforms us from the inside out.



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

- Paul describes our adoption into God's family in Romans 8:15, highlighting that we can call God "Abba, Father." How does this intimate and personal relationship with God influence how you view yourself and your identity? What areas of your life do you need to surrender to fully embrace your identity as God's child?
- 1 John 2:12 reminds us that our sins are forgiven on account of Jesus' name. How does knowing you are forgiven and adopted by God impact your daily life? Are there areas where you still struggle to accept His forgiveness and freedom?
- God transforms our hearts, minds, lives, and families when we surrender to Him. Which of these areas are you currently seeing God work in the most? Which area do you feel needs more of His transforming power? What steps can you take to invite the Holy Spirit into that area?
- 1 Peter 5:8–9 warns us to be alert and resist the enemy. What negative thought patterns, lies, or worldly influences are you currently facing? How can you stand firm in your faith and actively resist them? Consider how Scripture, prayer, or godly community can support you in this.

Sharing Your Transformation

When God transforms your life, it's meant to be shared. Let's read Mark 5:1–20 together and focus on a few verses:

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³ This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

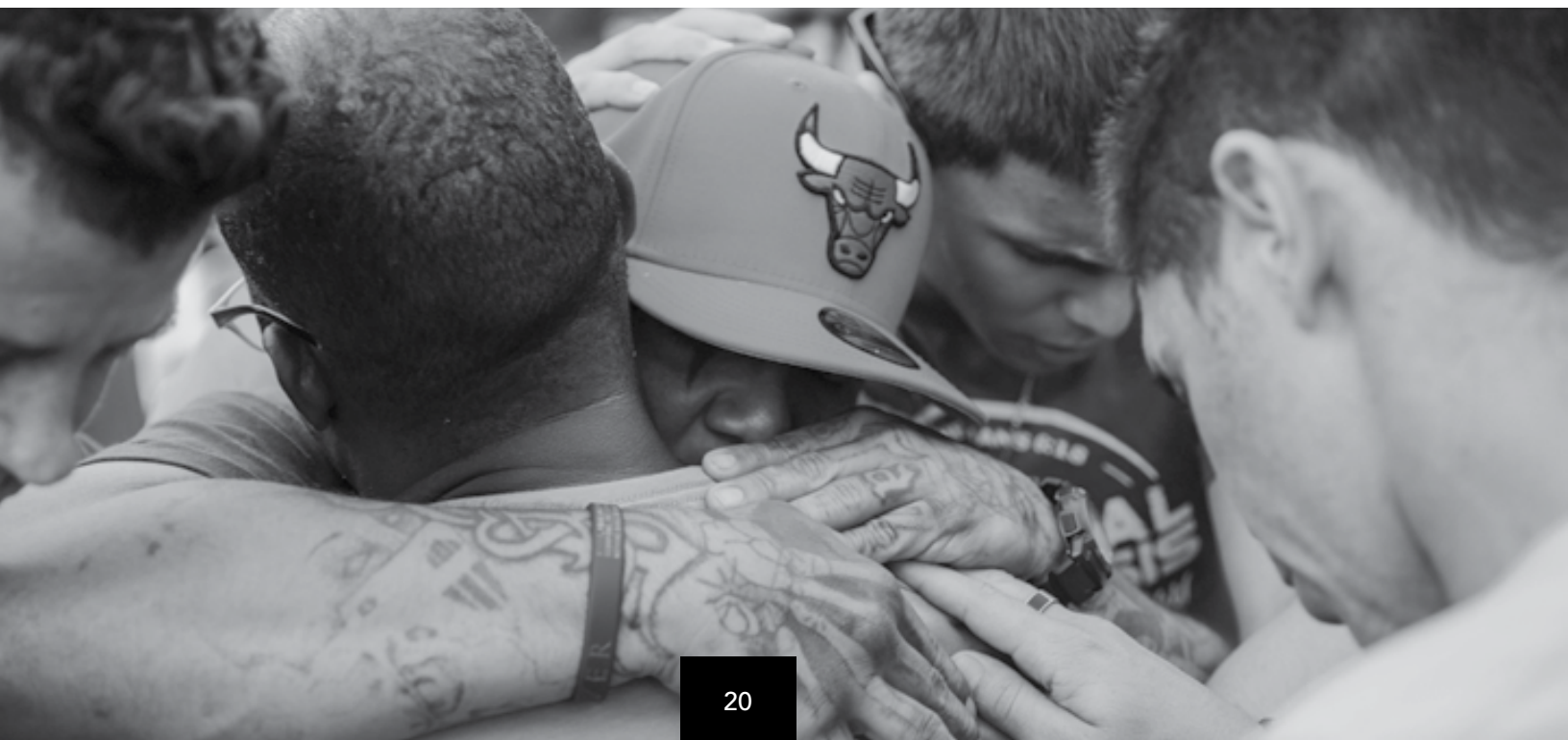
Here, we can see a vivid picture of the futility of human efforts to solve deep-seated, spiritual problems. The chains and irons represent society's attempts to control or "fix" this man's condition. These methods not only failed, but left him worse off — physically scarred and emotionally broken.

Many of us can relate to this man's experience. We may have tried various "solutions" to our problems. While these attempts are often made with good intentions, they often leave us feeling more hopeless and carrying the scars of repeated failures. It's important to recognize that true healing and transformation often require a power beyond human capability.

⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

This verse captures the depth of despair that often comes with terrible struggles. The man's continuous crying out and self-harm reflect a pain so intense that it seems endless — a never-ending year of a thousand nights.

Suppose you've been living in the grip of addiction or other life-controlling issues. In that case, this feeling of perpetual darkness is all too familiar. It can seem as though joy and relief are impossible and always out of reach.



⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷ He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” ⁸ For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

⁹ Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” ¹⁰ And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

¹¹ A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. ¹² The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” ¹³ He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Never forget that Jesus has complete authority over every and any spiritual force you might face. The sheer number of demons (enough to drive 2,000 pigs to their death!) emphasizes the severity of the man’s condition and the magnitude of Christ’s power.

No matter how overwhelming or impossible our situation may seem, it is not beyond Jesus’ ability to transform. His power far exceeds the forces that bind us — whether they’re addictions, traumas, or deeply ingrained patterns of behavior. You can trust in Christ’s power, even when your battles seem unwinnable.

¹⁴ Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. ¹⁵ When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

This verse provides a striking before-and-after picture of transformation: The once-wild, naked, and tormented man is now calm, clothed, and in his right mind. This dramatic change shows us how Jesus’ transformative power affects the whole person: body, mind, and spirit.

This is also a powerful demonstration of God’s mercy. It’s not just about removing the negative influences but about restoring the person to wholeness and dignity. This kind of profound change is something only God can accomplish.

¹⁶ Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷ Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸ As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹ Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”



These verses highlight an essential aspect of transformation — the call to share our story. Jesus' instruction to the man emphasizes that personal transformation is not just for individual benefit, but also to impact others.

As Don Coley beautifully puts it, “When the man begged to follow Jesus, he was told ‘No. Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you.’ The God who is powerful enough to calm the storm is also tender enough to remember a family at home that needs to know their loved one has been made well.” Our healing and transformation can be a powerful testimony to those who knew us before, especially our family and close community.

When we experience God's healing and mercy, we're called to be witnesses of His power to others.

“Every person that Jesus saves, He sends.”

—Dale Oquist

²⁰ So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

By sharing his story, this man spreads the news of Jesus' power and mercy throughout the region.

“If a story isn't told, it's almost as if it didn't happen.”

—Nolan Crooks

This is the importance of testimony in the Christian life. Sharing our stories of transformation not only impacts others but also reinforces our own faith and helps us fully realize the change God has worked in us.

“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.”

Luke 8:39



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What brought you to New Life Community today? How do you hope to experience transformation in your life?
- What are ways that you can involve godly community and accountability in your life?
- Reflecting on the story of the demon-possessed man in Mark 5, can you relate to feeling bound by chains that seem impossible to break? How does Jesus' power in this story give you hope?
- As you begin this journey of transformation, what is one practical step you can take this week to "set your mind on things above" (Colossians 3:2) rather than on earthly struggles?



Verses to Reflect on From This Chapter:

- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)
- "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20 (NIV)
- "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2 (NIV)
- "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)
- "I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name." 1 John 2:12 (NIV)
- "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3:2 (NIV)
- "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" Romans 8:15 (NIV)
- "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3 (NIV)
- "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings." 1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV)
- "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." Luke 8:39 (NIV)

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24/7 Prayer and Help
Line, call **888.520.0620**
right now.

Leader's Guide: Chapter 2 –

It's Never too Late to Come Home

Chapter Summary

This chapter centers on the parable of the Prodigal Son, revealing the depth of God's grace, forgiveness, and restorative love. It highlights the emotional and spiritual journey of those who feel they've wandered too far from God, carrying shame, guilt, and fear of rejection. The message is clear: no matter how far we've strayed, the Father is always ready to welcome us back.

We explore four key phases of the prodigal's journey — departure, famine, turning point, and homecoming — and use this story to reflect on how God meets us with compassion, not condemnation. The Father who runs toward us is an image of relentless love, and His restoration is complete, not conditional. Testimonies in this chapter bring the story to life, offering real examples of grace that rewrites even the most broken past.

Key Principles

1. **God's Love Is Unchanging and Unconditional** – Luke 15:20
2. **No One Is Too Far Gone for God's Grace** – 1 John 1:9; John 3:16-17
3. **The Father Runs to Restore, Not Punish** – 1 John 3:1; John 1:12
4. **Coming Home Begins with Repentance and Recognition** – Matthew 5:3; Acts 3:19
5. **Our Identity as Children of God Is Fully Restored** – Romans 8:15; Psalm 103:8

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 2

Step 1: Encounter the Parable

Begin by reading Luke 15:11–24 aloud. Reflect on each phase of the son's journey. Discuss the emotional progression — from rebellion to desperation, realization, and reconciliation.

Step 2: Relate to the Prodigal

Facilitate honest sharing around the question: Where have you seen yourself in this story? What distant country have you been in?

Step 3: Highlight the Father's Heart

Draw out the shocking and beautiful reality of the Father running. Discuss how this challenges our perception of God's nature.

Step 4: Restoration, Not Punishment

Explore how the Father restores his son without shame or probation. How does that reflect how God treats us?

Step 5: Share Testimonies of Coming Home

Invite participants to share moments where they felt God welcomed them home. Use the stories of Jeremy Pierce-Sunia and Michael Mericle as springboards.

Step 6: Practical Steps Toward Home

Break down the five steps listed in the chapter:

1. Recognize Your Need
2. Turn Back to God
3. Receive God's Forgiveness
4. Embrace Your Identity
5. Live in God's Love

Step 7: Reflect with Scripture and Song

Use "How Deep the Father's Love for Us" as a moment of worship or journaling. End by reading 1 John 4:16.

Simple Teaching Moments

- **The Father Runs:** In ancient culture, running was undignified. God breaks every rule to get to us.
- **Shame Isn't the End:** God doesn't meet us with judgment — He meets us with mercy.
- **Restoration Over Reprimand:** The robe and ring weren't just gifts; they were signs of belonging.
- **You're Still a Son:** Even when the prodigal rehearsed a servant speech, the Father called him son.
- **You Can Come Home:** No matter how long it's been or how far you've gone — it's never too late.

Additional Group Questions

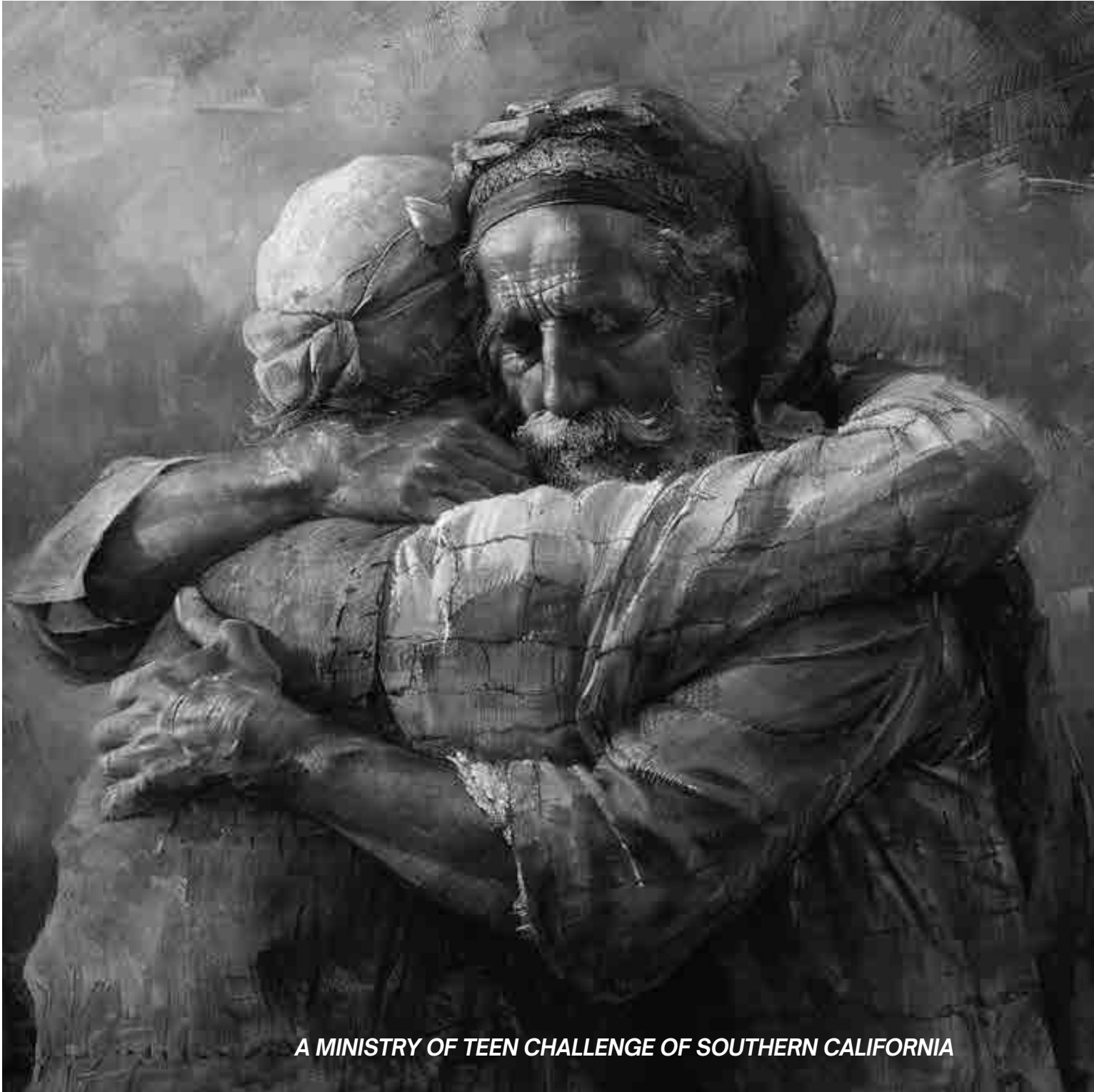


- What part of the Prodigal Son's story resonates most deeply with your own?
- Have you ever felt "too far gone" to return to God? How does this chapter challenge that belief?
- What keeps people from coming home to God even when they know they need to?
- How have you experienced God's forgiveness and restoration in your life?
- How can we extend the Father's kind of forgiveness to others?

This Leader's Guide will help you create a space where the group can wrestle with shame, celebrate God's pursuit, and find hope in the promise that God still calls them His children. The Father isn't just waiting — He's running.

Chapter 2:

**IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO
COME HOME**



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Chapter 2:

It's Never Too Late to Come Home

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”

Luke 15:20

Have you ever felt like you've wandered too far from home? Like your mistakes and poor choices have taken you to a place where you can't possibly return? Perhaps you've carried the weight of shame, believing that your past disqualifies you from God's love. Or maybe you've convinced yourself that you're not worthy of forgiveness and a fresh start.

The good news is that with God, it's never too late to come home. His love for you is unchanging, unconditional, and unending. No matter how far you've strayed or how long you've been away, your Heavenly Father is eagerly waiting for your return.

In this chapter, we'll explore the profound truth of God's love through the lens of Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son. This story isn't just about a wayward child; it's a powerful revelation of the Father's heart.

The Prodigal's Journey

Let's examine the key parts of this parable found in Luke 15:11–24:

1. The Son's Departure (v.12-13) “The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.”

In Jewish culture, inheritance was typically divided after the father's death. By asking for it early, the son displayed a shocking disregard for their relationship. He was essentially telling his father, “I wish you were dead.”

His actions revealed a heart that valued possessions over relationship, and immediate gratification over long-term wisdom. How often do we find ourselves doing the same, prioritizing temporary pleasures over lasting joy in God? We set off for our own “distant country,” foolishly believing we can find fulfillment on our terms.

As Henri J.M. Nouwen profoundly stated in *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*, **“I am the prodigal son every time I search for unconditional love where it cannot be found.”** The son's departure in the parable reveals the depth of his rebellion and selfishness.

2. The Famine Comes (v.14-16) *“After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.”*



The son's resources ran out, leaving him in desperate circumstances. His experience mirrors the emptiness and despair that often follow when we seek fulfillment apart from God. The temporary pleasures of sin never satisfy; they always leave us wanting more. Sin can also lead us to do things we swore we'd never do, taking us to places of shame and embarrassment. If we were to look in the mirror, we might not even recognize ourselves or the person we have become.

For a Jewish audience, the idea of feeding pigs would have been particularly shocking and degrading. The son was not only destitute, but also engaged in work that was culturally and religiously repugnant. Sin can bring us to such depths, leaving us longing for things that can never truly satisfy our souls.

“The farther I run away from the place where God dwells, the less I am able to hear the voice that calls me the Beloved, and the less I hear that voice, the more entangled I become in the manipulations and power games of the world.”

—Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*

3. The Turning Point (v.17-19) *“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’”*

This moment of realization marks a crucial turning point. The son “came to himself” — he saw his situation clearly and recognized his need to return home.



Sin often clouds our judgment and distorts our perspective. The son's recognition that even his father's servants were better off than he was shows a humbling realization of what he had left behind. It's a powerful reminder that true fulfillment and provision are found in the Father's house.

4. *The Father's Response (v.20-24) "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."*

The father saw the son "while he was still a long way off" — he had been watching and waiting for his son's return. God, too, anticipates our repentance. He's not passive in our return; He's actively looking for us, ready to welcome us home. Before the son could even deliver his rehearsed speech, the father was already embracing him.

Personal and Group Reflection Questions



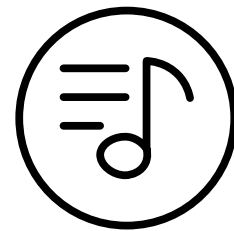
- What parts of the Prodigal Son story (Luke 15:11-24) resonated most with you?
- In what ways can you relate to the prodigal son?
- What were/are the temptations that caused you to look for something else to satisfy you?

The Father Who Runs

One of the most striking images in the parable of the Prodigal Son is that of the father running to meet his returning child. This was a culturally shocking act — in that time and place, it would have been considered undignified for an older man to run. Yet the father's love overrides all social conventions.

This powerful image of a father running to embrace his wayward child has inspired many contemporary songs and writings. They paint a picture of God as a Father who doesn't wait passively but actively pursues us. He's not standing still with arms crossed, waiting for us to crawl back in shame. Instead, He's watching eagerly for our return, ready to run to us with open arms. One such song, "When God Ran" by Phillips, Craig, and Dean, beautifully captures this moment of divine pursuit and forgiveness:

*The only time I ever saw him run
Was when He ran to me
He took me in his arms
Held my head to his chest
Said, "My son's come home again!"
Lifted my face, wiped the tears from my eyes
With forgiveness in his voice he said,
"Son, do you know I still love you?"*



Imagine the scene: The father sees his son from afar. Without hesitation, he hitches up his robes and runs. Can you picture the joy on his face? The tears in his eyes? He doesn't wait for his son to reach him or for an apology to be made. He closes the distance himself, overflowing with love and forgiveness.

The son, who had rehearsed his apology and plea for restoration, is overwhelmed. **"He omits make me a servant. The slavish spirit vanishes in the clasp of the father's arms. Bengel suggests that the father would not suffer him to utter the news,"** writes Marvin R. Vincent, D.D. in Word Studies in the New Testament. The son had planned to offer himself as a servant, thinking that was the only way to earn his father's grace. But as Norman McLeod once said, when the father put his arms around the boy, *he just shut his mouth* and said, **"I take you to my heart, and that's enough."**

This is the heart of our Heavenly Father. He's not just willing to take us back — He's longing to! He's scanning the horizon, hoping to catch a glimpse of us turning towards home. And when we do, His response is immediate and overwhelming.

The father in the parable doesn't just welcome his son; he restores him fully. He embraces him, kisses him, and calls for a celebration. There's no period of probation, no list of conditions to be met—just pure, unadulterated joy at his son's return.

This is the kind of love God has for each of us. No matter how far we've strayed or how long we've been gone, He's ready to run to us, embrace us, and welcome us home. His love hasn't diminished. His forgiveness is complete. And His joy at our return knows no bounds.



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

- In the parable, the father doesn't wait—he runs to meet his son. How does it change your view of God to picture Him running toward you instead of waiting for you to earn your way back?
- In that culture, it was shocking for an older man to run. The father's love overrode dignity and social norms. What does this say about the depth of God's love for you? Have you ever experienced God breaking through "expectations" to reach you?
- The father embraced his son before he could finish his apology. How does this challenge the way we sometimes think about God's forgiveness? Do you ever struggle to believe His grace is immediate and complete?
- The son planned to return as a servant, but the father restored him as a son. Do you ever approach God with a "servant mentality," feeling like you must earn His acceptance? What would it look like to live from the truth that you are fully restored as His child?
- The father wouldn't even let the son finish his apology—his love interrupted the speech. How does it change your view of grace to realize that God's love and forgiveness often meet us before we can say or do the "right" things?
- Norman McLeod said the father's embrace was enough—it silenced the son's shame. What would it look like for you to rest in God's embrace today, letting His love be "enough" instead of trying to add your own efforts?
- The prodigal son's turning point was when he decided to go home. Can you think of a time in your life when you "turned back" toward God? What happened when you did? How did you sense His embrace?

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The Father's Heart

Understanding God's love is crucial to our journey home. His love isn't based on our performance or worthiness. He loves us because He is love (1 John 4:8). The Father's heart beats with compassion, forgiveness, and an unquenchable desire for reconciliation with His children.

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!"*

1 John 3:1

This verse reveals the extravagant nature of God's love. It's not just given, but "lavished" on us. And it results in a new identity — we are called and are God's children.

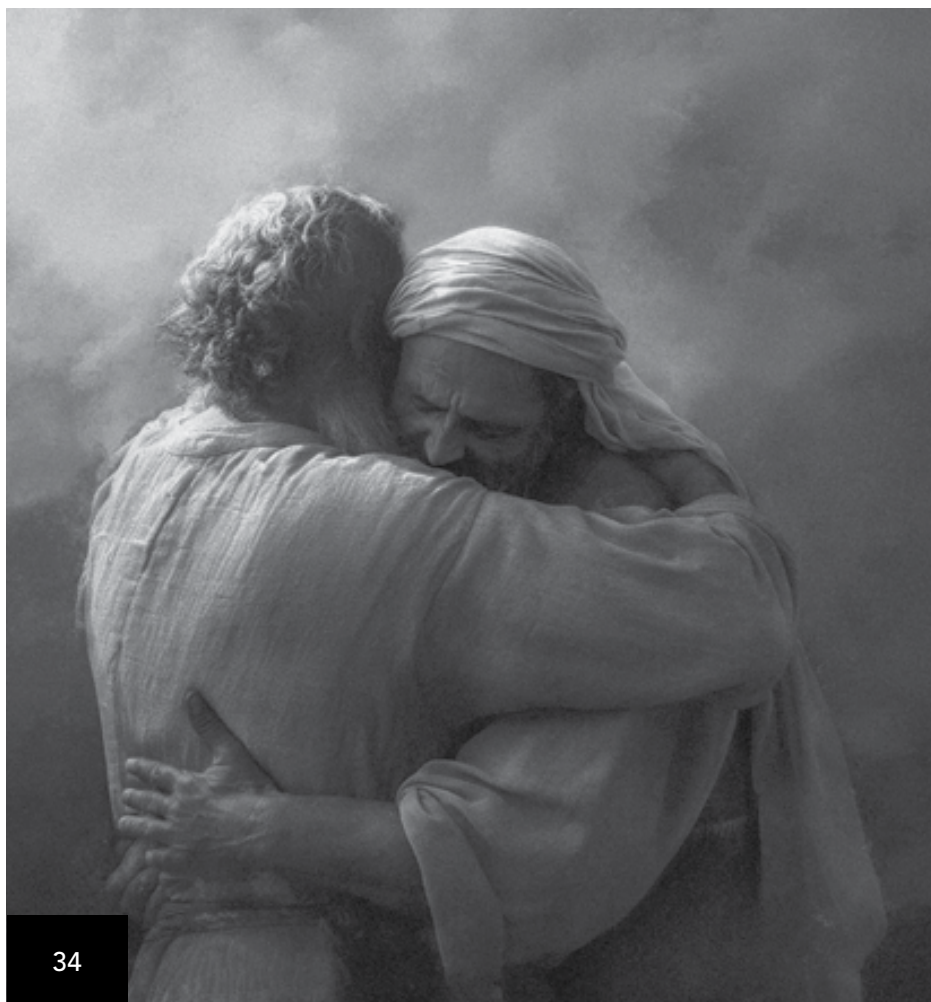
The father in the parable represents God's heart towards His lost children. Like the father, God is:

1. **Watchful** - He saw the son while he was still far off, indicating he was looking for him.
2. **Compassionate** - He was filled with compassion, not anger, judgment, or resentment.
3. **Eager to Restore** - He ran to meet his son, an act that would have been considered undignified.
4. **Generous in Forgiveness** - He didn't wait for a full apology but embraced his son immediately.

The Father's Restoration

When the father in the parable puts the ring on his son's finger and the robe on his back, it's a powerful symbol of complete restoration. These weren't just gifts – they were symbols of position and belonging. The ring likely signified authority, while the robe represented honor in the household.

This is a beautiful picture of how God restores us when we return to Him. He doesn't grudgingly take us back as servants – He joyfully restores us as sons and daughters. Our past mistakes don't disqualify us from His family. Instead, He reinstates all the rights and privileges of being His child.



In moments of deep personal struggle and brokenness, experiencing God's love can be both overwhelming and transformative. Michael Mericle, a 2010 Teen Challenge alumnus, reflects on this profound experience, illustrating how God's grace and acceptance can reach us even in our darkest times. He shares:



God stepped into my life in the midst of the wreckage and the chaos that I had created and sought me out and was willing to adopt me into His family. I mean, chose me; when looking in the mirror, I would not choose me.



This is the heart of our Father — a heart that chooses us, loves us, and restores us, even when we can't see our own worth.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- The father gave his son a ring and a robe—symbols of authority, honor, and full belonging. How does it impact you to know that God doesn't just forgive your past but restores you completely as His child? Where do you still struggle to believe this is true for you?
- Michael Mericle shared that God chose him even when he wouldn't have chosen himself. Have you ever felt unworthy of God's love? How does it change your perspective to realize that God intentionally chooses and adopts you into His family?
- The son's mistakes didn't disqualify him—his father's love reestablished his place. What lies about your worth or identity do you need to release today in order to embrace God's truth that you are loved, valued, and restored?

Coming Home

The journey of coming home to God often begins with recognizing our need for God, much like the prodigal son who “came to his senses” in the pig pen. Jesus spoke about this in the Beatitudes when He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). To be poor in spirit means to recognize our spiritual bankruptcy apart from God, and admit that we desperately need Him.

Once we’ve recognized our need, the next step is to return to God—what the Bible calls repentance. It’s not just feeling sorry for our actions but deciding to change direction. As we turn back, we encounter God’s forgiveness. His Word assures us: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). God’s forgiveness is not based on our worthiness, but on His character and Christ’s sacrifice.

Coming home isn’t just about being forgiven; it’s about being restored to our place in God’s family. When the father in the parable puts the ring on his son’s finger and the robe on his back, it’s a powerful symbol of complete restoration. These weren’t just gifts – they were symbols of position and belonging. Similarly, when we return to God, He doesn’t grudgingly take us back as servants. He joyfully restores us as sons and daughters! Our past mistakes don’t disqualify us from His family. Instead, He reinstates all the rights and privileges of being His child.



Jeremy Pierce-Sunia, a 2017 Teen Challenge alumnus, shared a powerful experience highlighting this deep sense of coming home. Reflecting on his time at Teen Challenge, he said:

“Two days into my residency at Teen Challenge, I came in on a Monday. On Wednesday that night we had a chapel, and I remember just feeling the sense of warmth like, ‘Hey, you know you’re finally home and I’ve been missing you.’ And I just kind of fell on the ground. I had tears coming out of my eyes. I don’t even remember what the pastor spoke about that night, but I do remember that I hadn’t felt God like that before. And it was like I felt that [God] had actually missed me when I was gone. And that I was back [home].”

So, what does it mean for us to “come home” to God? Here are some practical steps:

- 1. Recognize Your Need:** Like the prodigal son, we need to “come to our senses” and recognize our need for God. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* - Matthew 5:3
- 2. Turn Back to God:** Repentance isn’t just feeling sorry; it’s a decision to turn away from our old life and towards God. *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”* - Acts 3:19
- 3. Receive God’s Forgiveness:** God’s forgiveness is always available, but we must receive it. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).
- 4. Embrace Your Identity as God’s Child:** Coming home means accepting your place in God’s family. *“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”* (John 1:12).
- 5. Live in God’s Love:** Let God’s love transform how you see yourself and how you live. *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them”* (1 John 4:16).

As you journey through this chapter, you might find yourself standing in the “distant country,” feeling far from God. But no matter where you are on this journey, remember: **the Father is watching, waiting, ready to run to you with open arms. It’s never too late to come home. No matter where you’ve been or what you’ve done, His love and forgiveness are waiting for you.**



As Henri Nouwen beautifully puts it in *The Return of the Prodigal Son*:

“God has been waiting for me. He knows my inner struggle. He has seen my misery and guided me through all the dark valleys. When I look back at my life, I can see his presence always, even when I doubted it. Now he welcomes me home with the arms of endless love, and there is nothing he wants more than to embrace me as his beloved son.”

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



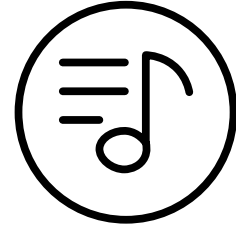
- Read Galatians 5:16-26. How do the “acts of the flesh” in verses 19-21 lead us away from God and into our own “distant country”? In contrast, what does it mean to “live by the Spirit,” and how can we practically apply that in our daily lives?
- What was your “come to my senses moment”? Have you had one yet?
- How can you make the decision to come back home to God?



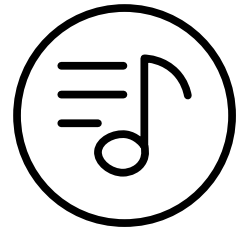
As you reflect on the prodigal son and the Father's patient and boundless love, take a moment to let the lyrics of "How Deep the Father's Love for Us" sink in. This song powerfully expresses the immense sacrifice of Jesus and the unfathomable love of the Father, who gave His only Son to make us—unworthy as we are—His treasure. Don't let shame, fear, or unworthiness keep you from returning to your Father's embrace. He is waiting, arms open wide, ready to welcome you home.

How Deep the Father's Love for Us

*How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure!
That He should give His only Son,
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss!
The Father turns His face away;
As wounds which marred the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.
How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure!
That He should give His only Son,
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss!
The Father turns His face away;
As wounds which marred the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.
Behold the man upon a cross:
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.*



*It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life:
I know that it is finished.
I will not boast in anything:
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ:
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart:
His wounds have paid my ransom.
Why should I gain from his reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart:
His wounds have paid my ransom.*



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- How can you better manage your time this week to prioritize your relationship with God?
- How can you meditate on and experience the love of God this week?
- How can you serve your community or church this week to express gratitude for God's love?
- How can you be a leader in your family this week by demonstrating God's forgiving love?
- How are you developing a discipline of prayer in your life this week?
- How can you incorporate the reading and studying of God's word into your life this week?
- Read and meditate on 1 John. What stands out to you about God's love?



Verses to Reflect on From This Chapter:



- "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." Luke 15:20 (NIV)
- "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" 1 John 3:1 (NIV)
- "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (NIV)
- "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." 1 John 4:16 (NIV)
- "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." Psalm 103:8 (NIV)
- "But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." Psalm 86:15 (NIV)
- "In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears." Psalm 18:6 (NIV)
- "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." Psalm 40:1-3 (NIV)
- "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" Luke 15:4 (NIV)
- "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23 (NIV)
- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16-17 (NIV)
- "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:1-2 (NIV)

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right now.

Leader's Guide: Chapter 3 –

The Power of the Blood: Silencing Accusations and Breaking Free From the Past

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the profound power of the blood of Jesus Christ to silence accusations, break the chains of the past, and empower believers to live in freedom and victory. From the Passover story in Exodus 12 to the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, the chapter draws on biblical narratives and real-life testimonies to show that Christ's blood is not only for salvation, but also for protection, deliverance, and ongoing transformation.

The blood of Jesus silences the voice of the accuser, reminding us of our identity as forgiven, restored, and beloved children of God. The chapter teaches participants how to "plead the blood," live in its protective covering, and use their testimonies to overcome darkness. It also reinforces the importance of renewing the mind, staying in godly community, and standing firm in faith.

Key Principles

1. **The Blood of Jesus Protects, Delivers, and Redeems** – Exodus 12:23; Hebrews 9:14
2. **You Overcome the Accuser by the Blood and Your Testimony** – Revelation 12:11
3. **Your Past Is Not More Powerful Than the Cross** – 2 Corinthians 5:17; Micah 7:19
4. **God's Judgment Is Freedom, Not Condemnation** – Romans 8:34; Isaiah 53:5
5. **You Are of Great Worth Because of the Price Paid for You** – 1 Peter 1:18-19

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 3

Step 1: Explore the Blood's Protection and Power

Begin with the Passover story in Exodus 12. Unpack the four reasons we plead the blood: protection, deliverance, new beginnings, and anticipation of testimony. Use Tim Dilena's story as a visual anchor.

Step 2: Silence the Accuser

Read Revelation 12:10-11 and Hebrews 12:24. Discuss the enemy's accusations and how the blood of Christ speaks a better word. Share Gary Wilkerson's teaching and encourage testimony-sharing in the group.

Step 3: Embrace Full Forgiveness and Restoration

Micah 7:19 and Isaiah 53 paint a picture of forgiveness and healing. Invite the group to reflect on the truth that their sins are cast into the sea, not near the shore but into the depths, never to return.

Step 4: Speak God's Judgments Over Your Life

Introduce Ron Brown's teaching about God's judgment bringing freedom. Facilitate discussion around identifying lies and replacing them with God's truth.

Step 5: Envision a New Future

Use John Eldredge's words to stir hope and imagination. Break off resignation and invite participants to dream with God about their future.

Step 6: Live in the Power of the Blood

End with practical application: renew the mind, plead the blood, connect in community, share your testimony, and stand firm in faith.

Step 7: Worship and Reflect

Read Isaiah 53 and Romans 8:34 aloud. Close with the hymn Nothing but the Blood and encourage personal journaling or prayer.

Simple Teaching Moments

- **The Blood of Jesus Is a Barrier the Enemy Cannot Cross**
- **Faith in the Blood, Not the Strength of Your Belief, Brings Protection**
- **Your Testimony Disarms the Enemy**
- **God's Judgment Isn't Condemnation — It's Freedom**
- **The Cross Proves Your Worth and Secures Your Victory**



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Reflect on a time when you were reminded of past mistakes. How did it make you feel? How does the truth of God's forgiveness through Christ's blood change your perspective?
- Read Exodus 12. What stands out to you about the power of the blood on the Israelites' doorposts? How can you apply this to your life today?
- How can you practically "plead the blood" over your life this week? What areas of your life need the protection and power of Christ's blood?
- Reflecting on Micah 7:19, how does the image of God casting our sins into the depths of the sea impact your understanding of forgiveness?
- How can you incorporate the practice of sharing your testimony into your daily life? Who might need to hear about what God has done for you?
- Read and meditate on Isaiah 53:4-6, 12b. How does understanding that Christ bore our sins and intercedes for us change how you view yourself and your past?
- Discuss the concept of Christ's blood bringing peace (shalom). How can this understanding transform your daily life and relationships?
- Take a moment to reflect—how purposeful have you been this week in building or maintaining life-giving relationships? What steps have you taken, and how can you strengthen those connections moving forward?
- In what ways can you serve your community or church this week as an expression of gratitude for the power of Christ's blood in your life?
- How are you developing a discipline of prayer and Bible study in your life? How can you incorporate meditation on the power of Christ's blood into these practices?

This guide equips leaders to help participants apply the truths of Christ's sacrifice in a personal and practical way. The blood of Jesus is not just a theological concept — it's a source of daily strength, hope, and victory.

Chapter 3:

THE POWER OF THE BLOOD: SILENCING ACCUSATIONS AND BREAKING FREE FROM THE PAST



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Chapter 3:

The Power of the Blood: Silencing Accusations and Breaking Free from the Past

“And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”

Revelation 12:11

Have you ever felt haunted by your past? Do you struggle with a nagging voice that constantly reminds you of your failures and shortcomings? Many of us grapple with accusations—both from our own minds and from the enemy—that threaten to keep us bound to our past mistakes and sins. But there’s good news: The power of Jesus’ blood offers us a way to silence these accusations and break free from the chains of our past. Along with this freedom, staying connected to a Godly community is crucial. As we walk together in this new life, we’ll be encouraged and edified by the support of others who are walking the same path. When we remain in fellowship with a community of believers, we experience a deeper strength and accountability that helps us stand firm in that victory, encouraging one another to live in the freedom and new life Christ has given us.



In this chapter, we’ll explore the power of Christ’s blood and how it applies to our lives today. The blood of Jesus not only saves us but protects us, delivers us, and gives us the power to overcome the enemy’s accusations. **While you may not fully grasp or understand this concept at first, we invite you to join us on this journey, even if it feels uncomfortable or very strange initially.** As we unpack this key aspect of your faith journey, we acknowledge that it encompasses one of the many mysteries of Christ that we may not completely comprehend on this side of eternity. However, trust that this exploration will be life-changing.

The Blood That Saves and Protects

To understand the power of Jesus’ blood, let’s first look at a powerful Old Testament story in Exodus 12 (verses 1-32) that foreshadows Christ’s sacrifice. Here we find the Israelites on the eve of their deliverance from Egypt. God instructs them to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood on their doorposts. This act of faith and obedience would protect them from the final plague — the death of the firstborn.

Pastor Tim Dilena of Times Square Church draws a powerful parallel between this event and our lives today:

There's power in the blood of Jesus, and there's protection in the blood of Jesus. Pleading the blood of Jesus in prayer is asking for protection ... We're asking God to put a barrier that cannot be crossed by Satan. When we plead the blood, and you'll see it in the Old Testament, it's a blood barrier that says the enemy can't cross it.

Just as the blood on the doorposts protected the Israelites from death, the blood of Jesus protects us from the enemy's attacks. When we apply the blood of Jesus to our lives through faith, we're erecting a spiritual barrier that the enemy cannot penetrate.

But the power of the blood goes beyond just protection. Pastor Tim continues:

The power of the blood of Jesus is greater than our own energy, our own humanity, and it's greater than our adversary. It's the power that saves us, but it's also the power that protects us, delivers us, gives us new starts and powerful testimonies.

When we plead the blood of Jesus over our lives, our homes, and our loved ones, we're doing four key things:

- 1. Praying for protection:** Just as the blood on the doorposts protected the Israelites from the destroyer in Egypt (Exodus 12:23), the blood of Jesus provides spiritual protection in our own lives. We're asking God to create a barrier against spiritual attacks, temptations, and harmful influences. This isn't about fear, but about claiming the victory Christ has already won. As Psalm 91:4 reminds us, "His faithful promises are your armor and protection."
- 2. Believing for deliverance:** The blood of Jesus doesn't just protect; it also delivers us from bondage, addiction, and the power of sin. When we plead the blood, we're expressing our faith in its power to break every chain and set us free. We're believing that whatever has held us captive — whether that's fear, addiction, or past trauma — must bow to the authority of Christ's blood.
- 3. Asking for a brand-new start:** Pleading the blood is a way of claiming the promise of 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" We're asking God to wash away our past and give us a fresh start. This isn't just about forgiveness, but about transformation. We're inviting God to renew our minds (Romans 12:2) and create in us a clean heart (Psalm 51:10).
- 4. Anticipating the day we'll tell our testimony of what the blood of Jesus has done in our lives:** When we plead the blood, we're doing so in faith, believing that God will work powerfully in our lives. We're looking forward to the day when we can share how God has transformed us through the power of Christ's blood. This anticipation keeps us hopeful and expectant, even in the midst of challenges. As 1 Peter 3:15 encourages us, we should always be ready to give an answer for the hope that we have.



Pastor Tim recalls a story from his time with David Wilkerson:

I remember David Wilkerson, the founder of Teen Challenge and Times Square Church, telling the story of that final night in Egypt when God was preparing the final miracle, the plague of the death angel. David Wilkerson said, 'Can you imagine what the households were like that night?'

He described two neighboring homes. In one house, they had placed the blood of the lamb on the doorpost and were celebrating the Passover feast. The children asked, 'Father, we hear screams. What are we going to do?' And the father replied, 'We're okay. We're safe. We have the blood of the lamb over our doorpost. You can eat, you can walk, we are protected by the blood.'

In the house next door, the children were also hearing the screams and asked their father, 'What are we going to do?' The father replied, 'I put the blood over the doorpost, but I'm not sure if it's going to work. We've never done anything like this before, so let's just pray that God keeps us during this.'

David Wilkerson would then ask, 'Which house was more protected?' And his answer was always, 'They're both protected. Because it's not your doubts, and it's not your faith. It's the blood of Jesus Christ that has set us free.'

Pleading the blood isn't a magic formula, but a powerful expression of faith in what Jesus has accomplished for us on the cross. It's a way of actively applying the truths of the gospel to our daily lives. As we practice this, we're reminding ourselves and declaring to the spiritual realm that we belong to Christ and are covered by His sacrifice.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Reflect on a time when you were reminded of past mistakes. How did it make you feel? How does the truth of God's forgiveness through Christ's blood change your perspective on those memories?
- Read Exodus 12. What stands out to you about the power of the blood on the Israelites' doorposts? How can you apply this to your life today?
- How can you practically "plead the blood" over your life this week? What areas of your life need the protection and power of Christ's blood?



Silencing the Accuser

One of the most significant ways the blood of Jesus works in our lives is by silencing the accusations of the enemy. Revelation 12:10 refers to Satan as “the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night.” These accusations can take many forms: reminders of past sins, whispers of unworthiness, or suggestions that we’re beyond forgiveness.

But Hebrews 12:24 tells us that the blood of Jesus “speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” While Abel’s blood cried out for vengeance, the blood of Jesus speaks of forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation.

Gary Wilkerson, speaking at a Teen Challenge Pastors Conference, emphasized the importance of not agreeing with these accusations:

The accusations are not going to stop till Jesus comes. But here’s what can stop: the agreements with the accusations.

“*When Satan attacks you, he’s going to do that. If you can rebuke that, if you can stand against it, great. And if somebody can mutually encourage you, come alongside you and say, ‘Don’t listen to that lie. That’s not truth,’ then you can be set free from that.*”

Revelation 12:11 tells us, “They triumphed over [the accuser] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.”

The power of your testimony cannot be overstated. When you share what God has done in your life, you’re declaring the faithfulness and power of God. Your testimony is living proof of the transformative power of Christ’s blood.

Sharing your testimony doesn’t have to be complicated or formal. Here are some practical ways to incorporate testimony-sharing into your life:

- **Start with Prayer:** Ask God to bring to mind specific instances of His work in your life.
- **Be Specific:** Instead of general statements, share concrete examples of how God has worked in your life.
- **Be Honest:** Don’t shy away from sharing your struggles. Your vulnerability can help others relate and see God’s grace more clearly.
- **Keep it Current:** While your conversion story is important, also share recent examples of God’s faithfulness.
- **Practice:** The more you share your testimony, the more comfortable and effective you’ll become at it.
- **Use Various Platforms:** Share in person, on social media, through writing, or whatever medium you’re comfortable with.
- **Be Ready:** As 1 Peter 3:15 says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

Your testimony is uniquely yours. No one can argue with your personal experience of God’s work in your life. As you consistently share what Jesus has done for you, you’ll find that the accuser’s voice grows weaker, drowned out by the powerful story of God’s redemption in your life.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Satan accuses us day and night with reminders of our past and whispers of unworthiness. What lies or accusations from the enemy do you find yourself believing most often? How can the truth of Jesus’ blood and forgiveness silence those lies in your life?
- Gary Wilkerson said the accusations won’t stop, but what can stop is our agreement with them. In what ways have you agreed with the enemy’s accusations in the past? What does it look like to break that agreement and stand in God’s truth instead?
- Revelation 12:11 says we triumph “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony.” What part of your testimony do you need to share more boldly? How might sharing it not only silence the accuser in your life but also encourage others in theirs?

Breaking Free from the Past

One of the most beautiful aspects of the power of Christ's blood is its ability to free us from our past. Micah 7:19 paints a vivid picture of God's forgiveness: "You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

Matthew Henry, in his commentary on this verse, beautifully explains this concept:

When God forgives sin, he takes care that it never shall be remembered anymore against the sinner. He casts their sins into the sea; not near the shore-side, where they may appear again, but into the depths of the sea, never to rise again.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we're told, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" The blood of Jesus doesn't just cover our sins; it transforms us into new creations.

Breaking free from the past requires us to embrace the truth of who we are in Christ. This transformative journey starts by recognizing that God has already spoken freedom into our lives, inviting us to reject the lies that have held us captive and to step boldly into His promises. God has already declared powerful truths over your life, and He's calling you to agree with what He has spoken. His desire is to see you free. As Ron Brown says, the judgments God makes are not ones of condemnation but of freedom and transformation. He looks at the lies the enemy has tried to bind you with and says, "They do not belong." **In place of these lies, God brings His truth. Where there is addiction, He brings freedom; where there is confusion, He brings clarity. God's judgment is to remove the chains that held you back and replace them with His freedom and love.**



Jesus, the One who sits at the gate of your life, has made the final judgment—whom the Son sets free is free indeed. As Ron Brown puts it, "We have to fall down and plead our cause and say, God, I don't want that crazy thinking anymore that causes me to run from You; I want to run to You." His judgment is to give us a sound mind—one of peace, forgiveness, healing, and joy—so we can step into the fullness of life He created for us. When we align ourselves with what God has already declared, mountains begin to move. As Ron Brown says, "What mountain is too difficult for God? There's nothing too difficult for Him." **By agreeing with His truth and judgment, you are empowered to live out His purpose, free from fear, doubt, and shame.**

Breaking free from our past is also about hope and vision for our future. The blood of Jesus not only cleanses us from past sins but also empowers us to imagine and step into the new life He has for us. It's a call to reject the lie of stagnation and embrace the promise of transformation. John Eldredge writes about the challenge of becoming a new creation in his book *The Sacred Romance*:

One of the most poisonous of all Satan's whispers is simply, 'Things will never change.' That lie kills expectation, trapping our heart forever in the present. To keep desire alive and flourishing, we must renew our vision for what lies ahead. Things will not always be like this. Jesus has promised to 'make all things new.' Eye has not seen, ear has not heard all that God has in store for his lovers, which does not mean 'we have no clue so don't even try to imagine,' but rather, you cannot outdream God. Desire is kept alive by imagination, the antidote to resignation. We will need imagination, which is to say, we will need hope.

The thief who comes to kill, steal, and destroy also knows the importance of memories. He constantly reminds us of our shortcomings – our sins – in hopes that we will believe they are too great to be covered by God’s forgiveness. But the truth is that God has already covered our sins in a vast sea of forgetfulness.

Store these two things in your mind so you can remember them:

- **Don’t forget what God wants you to remember, and**
- **Don’t remember what God has already forgotten.**



The blood of Jesus doesn’t just wash away our past; it opens the door to a future filled with possibility. So, as you embrace the cleansing power of Christ’s blood, also embrace the hope and vision it brings. Allow yourself to imagine the new things God wants to do in and through you. This is the fullness of what it means to break free from the past through the power of Jesus’ blood.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- “What mountain is too difficult for God?” Ron Brown asks. What is one “mountain” in your life that feels immovable right now? How can agreeing with God’s truth empower you to face it with faith?
- John Eldredge warns that one of Satan’s most poisonous lies is: “Things will never change.” Where have you been tempted to believe this lie? What new vision or hope do you sense God is inviting you to imagine and pursue as part of His promise to “make all things new”?
- The reminder was given: Don’t forget what God wants you to remember, and don’t remember what God has already forgotten. What truths about God’s promises do you need to hold onto? And what past failures do you need to finally release into His “sea of forgetfulness”?
- Reflecting on Micah 7:19, how does the image of God casting our sins into the depths of the sea impact your understanding of forgiveness?
- How can you incorporate the practice of sharing your testimony into your daily life? Who might need to hear about what God has done for you?
- Read and meditate on Isaiah 53:4-6, 12b. How does understanding that Christ bore our sins and intercedes for us change how you view yourself and your past?
- Discuss the concept of Christ’s blood bringing peace (shalom). How can this understanding transform your daily life and relationships?

Living in the Power of the Blood

So, how do we practically live in the power of Christ's blood? Here are some key steps:

Recognize the Value God Places on You: If you needed to sell your house, one of the first things you'd do is determine the price. Realtors can provide the prices of similar properties; the neighborhood, the size of the house, how old it is, if it has upgraded features, and the repairs needed are also considerations. But the bottom line is this: the value of anything is established by the buyer. The value of the house is determined by what someone is willing to pay for it. When Satan lies to you about your worth, remind him of the price paid by Jesus when he left the comforts of heaven, was born a baby, and then became the man who was mocked, beaten, crucified, and forsaken.

You are of the greatest worth because Jesus paid the greatest price — that price was the precious blood of Jesus.

Renew Your Mind: Romans 12:2 instructs us, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This renewal is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Just as we need to clean our homes regularly, we need to consistently cleanse our minds of the world's toxic influences and replace them with God's truth. This might involve daily time in Scripture, regularly listening to biblical teaching, surrounding yourself with godly influences, and practicing gratitude. Remember, your mind is a battlefield. The enemy will try to plant thoughts of unworthiness and shame, but you have the power to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ!

Plead the Blood: While "pleading the blood" isn't a phrase found in Scripture, it's a powerful way to apply your faith in the finished work of Jesus. When you plead the blood over your life, your family, or your circumstances, you're essentially saying that you trust in the complete work of Christ on the cross, you apply the protection and power of Christ's sacrifice to your situation, and you resist the enemy's attempts to bring condemnation or fear. You might pray something like, *"Lord, I plead the blood of Jesus over my mind. Let Your truth reign in my thoughts, and let the power of Your sacrifice protect me from the enemy's lies."*

Surround Yourself with Godly Community: Remaining connected to a Godly community is vital, as genuine, life-giving relationships provide the support needed to walk in freedom and grow in maturity in Christ. Within community, we find the encouragement, accountability, and support we need to live a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit. These relationships provide a safe space to be honest about our struggles while also challenging us to keep moving forward. Together, we build one another up and experience the fullness of God's grace and love in ways we simply can't alone. In isolation, we suffer—but in community, we thrive.



Share Your Testimony: Don't keep quiet about what God has done in your life! Your story of redemption is a powerful weapon against the enemy's accusations. When you share how God has worked in your life, you're not only encouraging others, but you're also reminding yourself of God's faithfulness. Your testimony might include how you came to know Christ, times when God delivered you from difficult situations, instances where you experienced God's peace in the midst of trials, or how God has transformed your character over time. Don't underestimate the power of your story. It's evidence of the blood's transforming power in your life.

Stand Firm in Faith: Ephesians 6:16 encourages us to "take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." Standing firm isn't passive; it's an active posture of resistance against the enemy's attacks. This might look like declaring God's promises over your life, even when you don't feel them, choosing to believe God's Word over your emotions or circumstances, resisting temptation by recalling your identity in Christ and surrounding yourself with a community of believers who can support and encourage you.

As you reflect on the power of Christ's blood in your life, let the words of the hymn "Nothing but the Blood" sink deep into your heart:

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain:

O precious is the flow
that makes me white as snow;
no other fount I know;
nothing but the blood of Jesus.

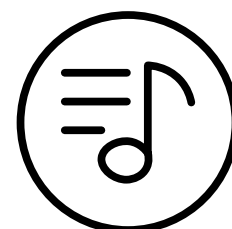
For my pardon this I see:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my cleansing this my plea:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing can for sin atone:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
Naught of good that I have done:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my righteousness:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.





The Suffering Servant: Our Healing and Redemption

Centuries before Jesus walked the earth, the prophet Isaiah penned words that would resonate through time and give us a vivid portrait of a suffering Messiah. These words, found in Isaiah 53, offer us a window into the very heart of God's redemptive plan. They speak of a love so profound, a sacrifice so complete that it would forever change the course of human history.

As we dive into Isaiah 53, we're not just examining ancient prophecy. We're uncovering the foundation of our faith, the basis of our hope, and the source of our healing. These verses reveal the depth of Christ's sacrifice and the breadth of its impact on our lives.

Verse 4: "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted."

Christ didn't just empathize with our pain from a distance. He took it upon Himself. The Hebrew word for "bore" implies a carrying, a taking upon oneself. This is the essence of substitutionary atonement — Christ standing in our place, carrying the full weight of our sin and suffering.

Verse 5: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

This verse gets to the heart of Jesus, acting as our substitute in death. The graphic language — "pierced" and "crushed" — emphasizes the severity of His suffering. This wasn't for His own sins but for ours. This truth lies at the core of the gospel: Christ taking on the punishment we deserved.

The phrase "the punishment that brought us peace was on him" uses the Hebrew word *shalom* for peace. This word means more than just an absence of conflict; it suggests complete well-being. Christ's suffering opened the way for us to experience true reconciliation and wholeness with God.



“By his wounds we are healed” is a powerful declaration that goes beyond spiritual healing. Sin is often described as an incurable disease in the Bible. But through Jesus’ suffering and death we find healing. And this healing isn’t through our own efforts or obedience, but through Christ’s sacrifice.

Verse 6: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

This verse presents a universal problem and its divine solution. The metaphor of straying sheep shows humanity’s tendency to wander from God’s path. It’s a picture of not just individual sins, but a fundamental disposition of the human heart away from God.

The solution is equally powerful: God Himself takes action. He “laid on him” — on Jesus — the iniquity of us all. This echoes the scapegoat ritual described in Leviticus 16, where the sins of the people were symbolically placed on an animal and sent away. Jesus, in a profoundly more significant way, became the ultimate sin-bearer, taking upon Himself the full weight of human transgression.

Verse 126: “For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Jesus not only bore our sins on the cross but continues to intercede for us. Even in the midst of His suffering, Jesus’ thoughts were on others as he prayed on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

He is constantly praying for us at the Father’s side (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25), which means He’s always looking out for us and making intercession on our behalf. This shows just how much our salvation cost and how deeply God loves us. The power of Christ’s blood, which Isaiah prophesied about and was shed on the cross, is the foundation for our healing, peace, and relationship with God.

These aren’t just historical facts or distant theological ideas; they are alive and have the power to change us today. When we feel weighed down by sin, we can find comfort in knowing Jesus carried that burden for us. When we’re broken, His wounds bring us healing. And when we feel alone in our struggles, His prayers for us bring comfort.





The power of Christ's blood, so clearly foretold in Isaiah and fulfilled on the cross, is still available to us now. It silences the voices that accuse us, breaks the chains of our past, and helps us move forward into the future God has planned for us. As you finish this chapter, let these truths sink into your heart and mind, transforming how you see yourself and the world around you.

The power of Jesus' blood in your life means this: you are healed, forgiven, and continually prayed for. Embrace this reality and walk in its freedom.



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:

- Isaiah says Jesus "took up our pain and bore our suffering." What kinds of pain or suffering in your life do you need to hand over to Him today? How does it change things to know He has already carried them?
- Scripture says, "the punishment that brought us peace was on Him." What does God's "shalom"—complete well-being and wholeness—look like in your life right now? Where do you most need His
- "By His wounds we are healed." What area of your life—physical, emotional, or spiritual—needs healing? How can you begin to trust Jesus with that place of brokenness?
- Verse 12 says Jesus "made intercession for the transgressors." Romans and Hebrews affirm He still intercedes for us today. How does it encourage you to know Jesus is actively praying for you right now? What might He be praying over your life?
- When you feel weighed down by sin or brokenness, Isaiah says Jesus carried it for you. What burden are you still carrying that Jesus already bore? How can you release it into His hands?
- The chapter closes by declaring: You are healed, forgiven, and continually prayed for. What would change in your daily life if you fully lived in this reality? What step can you take this week to walk in the freedom Christ purchased for you?
- Take a moment to reflect—how purposeful have you been this week in building or maintaining life-giving relationships? What steps have you taken, and how can you strengthen those connections moving forward?
- In what ways can you serve your community or church this week as an expression of gratitude for the power of Christ's blood in your life?
- How are you developing a discipline of prayer and Bible study in your life? How can you incorporate meditation on the power of Christ's blood into these practices?



Verses to Reflect on From This Chapter:

- “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.” Ephesians 1:7 (NIV)
 - “They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” Revelation 12:11 (NIV)
 - “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” Hebrews 9:14 (NIV)
 - “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13 (NIV)
 - “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” 1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)
 - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)
 - “Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.” Isaiah 53:4 (NIV)
 - “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2 (NIV)
 - “Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body...” Hebrews 10:19-20 (NIV)
 - “Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Romans 8:34 (NIV)
 - “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” 1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV)
 - “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)
 - “He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:10-12 (NIV)
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Leader's Guide: Chapter 4 –

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

Chapter Summary

This chapter reveals prayer as a supernatural key to transformation, breakthrough, and intimacy with God—especially in the journey of recovery. Participants are invited to understand the different forms of prayer, including adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession, and corporate prayer. Through biblical examples and real-life stories like Megan's, we learn that prayer isn't just a spiritual discipline—it's a lifeline that connects us to the mountain-moving power of God.

Whether alone or in community, persistent and heartfelt prayer aligns our hearts with God's purposes and invites His Spirit into every struggle, battle, and longing. Even in silence, God hears, comforts, and moves. This chapter teaches how to overcome common challenges in prayer and encourages a lifestyle of spiritual resilience, communal intercession, and purpose-filled prayer.

Key Principles

1. **Prayer Connects Us to the Supernatural Power of God** – Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 8:13
2. **Prayer Is Not Just for Crisis, but for Daily Intimacy** – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Matthew 6:6
3. **Corporate Prayer Releases Breakthrough** – Matthew 18:19-20; Acts 2:42
4. **Honest and Persistent Prayer Changes Everything** – Luke 18:1-8; Psalm 13
5. **Spiritual Authority Comes Through Prayer** – Ephesians 6:18; James 5:16

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 4

Step 1: Define and Explore Prayer

Introduce the five types of prayer and guide group reflection on how each plays a role in recovery. Share scriptures like Nehemiah 1:4 and Matthew 6:5-6.

Step 2: Experience the Power of Prayer

Read stories like Elijah (1 Kings 18), Paul and Silas (Acts 16), and Megan's testimony. Ask the group to reflect on how God has answered their own prayers.

Step 3: Embrace Community Prayer

Discuss the value of corporate prayer in healing and breakthrough. Use Acts 2 and James 5 as foundational texts. Lead a time of group prayer and confession.

Step 4: Build a Personal Prayer Practice

Teach practical tools for building a prayer rhythm: journaling, praying Scripture, finding quiet spaces, joining prayer groups, and listening in silence.

Step 5: Engage in Spiritual Warfare

Unpack Ephesians 6 and the Armor of God. Empower participants to use prayer as a spiritual weapon and step into intercessory roles.

Step 6: Overcome Challenges in Prayer

Address distractions, discouragement, and spiritual dryness. Share encouragement from Psalm 13, Psalm 22, and Romans 8:26.

Step 7: Stepping into Authority

Close with a reminder from Ephesians 1:18-20 and Cătalin Baciú's quote: prayer is the path to spiritual authority. Invite the group to commit to growing in prayer this week.

Simple Teaching Moments

- **Prayer is a Lifeline, Not a Last Resort**
- **God is Not Silent—He Whispers in the Stillness**
- **Your Honest, Broken Prayers Stir Heaven**
- **We Fight Battles on Our Knees**
- **Prayer in Community Unlocks Supernatural Breakthrough**

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?
- 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?
- 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?

This chapter is a call to arms—an invitation to step boldly into a life of prayer and power. Encourage participants to pray expectantly, persistently, and together as they move deeper into the heart of God.

Chapter 4:

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



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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.

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?



Break in the Journey

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.

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)

Notes

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**GET PRAYER.
GET SUPPORT.
GET HELP.**

To speak to someone
from Teen Challenge's
24/7 Prayer and Help
Line, call **888.520.0620**
right now.

Leader's Guide: Chapter 5 –

Designed for Devotion: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Worship

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the life-changing power of worship and its essential role in recovery and transformation. Worship isn't limited to music or Sunday services—it's about daily surrender, obedience, gratitude, service, and living in community. Worship aligns our hearts with God's will, dethrones idols, and anchors us in our identity as beloved children of God. Through biblical stories like Abraham and Isaac, the alabaster jar, and the Samaritan woman, and testimonies like Crystal's, we see that worship invites God into our brokenness and releases beauty from surrender.

In a worshipping community, believers uplift one another and experience the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit. Worship, both personal and communal, becomes a powerful tool for healing, identity restoration, and breaking the cycle of addiction. This chapter calls participants to live lives of worship in spirit and truth, stepping into the joy and freedom that only God can provide.

Key Principles

- 1. We Were Created for Worship** – Isaiah 43:7, Ephesians 2:10
- 2. True Worship Requires Surrender** – Genesis 22:1-18, Romans 12:1
- 3. Worship Transforms Brokenness into Beauty** – Mark 14:3-9
- 4. Worship Shapes Identity** – 1 Peter 2:9
- 5. Worship in Community Breaks Chains** – John 4:23-24, Acts 2:42
- 6. Praise Shifts Perspective and Releases Power** – Psalm 42:11, Psalm 103:2-4

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 5

Step 1: Define Worship

Explore what worship is and isn't. Use Genesis 22 and Romans 12:1 to frame the idea of worship as total surrender, not just music. Reflect on C.S. Lewis's and Corrie Ten Boom's quotes.

Step 2: Identify Barriers to Worship

Discuss idols, distractions, or family habits that hinder true worship. Encourage participants to identify their "alabaster jars" that need to be broken.

Step 3: Embrace Worship as a Lifestyle

Read Romans 12:1 and Galatians 5:22-23. Talk about daily habits of surrender, service, gratitude, and obedience. Share about Brother Lawrence and practicing the presence of God.

Step 4: Worship in Community

Use Psalm 133, Acts 2, and stories like Crystal's to highlight the power of community worship. Lead group prayer or worship time.

Step 5: Encounter God in Brokenness

Reflect on stories like the Samaritan woman and Horatio Spafford. Discuss how God meets us in grief and shame, and transforms it into beauty.

Step 6: Rediscover Identity Through Worship

Read 1 Peter 2:9. Help participants replace past labels with their true identity in Christ. Use worship to reinforce these truths.

Step 7: Practice Praise and Reflection

Guide the group through psalms of praise (Psalm 16, 42, 103). Encourage creative expressions of praise like journaling, art, or song.

Simple Teaching Moments

- **Worship Is a Lifestyle, Not a Location**
- **God Uses Broken Things to Release Beautiful Fragrance**
- **Worship Redefines Who We Are**
- **Praise is a Weapon in the Battle for Freedom**
- **Surrender Makes Room for the Spirit to Move**



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What does worship mean to you personally? How has your understanding of worship changed as you've progressed in your recovery journey?
- Reflect on the story of Abraham and Isaac. Have you ever felt God asking you to surrender something important to you? How did you respond?
- What resonated with you most about Crystal's story?
- The woman with the alabaster jar broke a valuable family heirloom to worship Jesus. What "family heirlooms" (traditions, habits, or beliefs) might you need to break to worship God fully?
- What "idols" or distractions might be hindering your worship? What steps can you take to dethrone them and allow Christ to reign supreme in your heart?
- How does the image of brokenness in the alabaster jar reflect God's ability to use our surrender to create beauty and impact others?
- How can you incorporate worship into your daily routines?
- How has focusing on God's attributes helped you in times of temptation or struggle?
- Reflect on 1 Peter 2:9. How might embracing your identity as "chosen" and part of a "royal priesthood" impact your recovery journey?
- In what areas of your life do you find it most challenging to surrender to God's will? How can worship help in these areas?
- How can we as a group encourage and support each other in cultivating lifestyles of worship?
- What's one specific way you plan to prioritize worship in your life this week?

This chapter is a call to live a lifestyle of worship—a life marked by daily surrender, heartfelt praise, and obedience to God in every area. Worship is not limited to a moment or a song; it's a posture of the heart that brings freedom, breaks idols, and restores our true identity as beloved children of God. As we live in worship—individually and in community—we encounter the transforming power of God's presence and step into the fullness of the life He created us for.

Chapter 5:

DESIGNED FOR DEVOTION: CULTIVATING A LIFESTYLE OF WORSHIP



A NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CURRICULUM SERIES



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Chapter 5:

Designed for Devotion: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Worship

“It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men.”

—C.S. Lewis

Have you ever wondered why we were created? The Bible tells us that we were made for a profound purpose: to worship God (Isaiah 43:6-7, 21; Ephesians 2:10). This truth holds immense power for those of us on the journey of recovery and transformation. Let's explore how worship — far more than just singing songs in a Sunday service — can be a powerful force in breaking the chains of addiction and reshaping our lives.

Engaging in worship within the community of believers also reflects one of the intended functions of the body of Christ, where we not only uplift one another but also experience the manifestation of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. In this collective worship, we find strength, healing, and the transformative work of God in our lives.

True Worship

At its core, worship is about surrendering our whole selves to God and acknowledging His supremacy in our lives. It's an attitude of the heart that says, *"God, You are worthy of all my devotion."*

The story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-18 gives us a clear picture of true worship. This story itself may feel challenging, because it shows us the depths of faith and obedience that true worship may ask of us.

The story begins with God testing Abraham:

“Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.’”

Genesis 22:1-2





Try to imagine the weight of this command. Isaac was not just Abraham's son; he was the long-awaited child of promise, the one through whom God had said He would establish His covenant. Abraham and Sarah had waited decades for this child, and now God was asking Abraham to give him up.

But Abraham's response is remarkable. The next verse simply states, "Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac" (Genesis 22:3). There's no record of argument, no pleading with God, just simple obedience. As they approach the place of sacrifice, Abraham tells his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you" (Genesis 22:5). In this moment, Abraham frames what he is about to do—an act of ultimate surrender and trust in God's plan—as worship. **True worship is found in obedience, even when the path ahead is unclear and the cost is great.**

As they neared the place of sacrifice, Isaac noticed they had fire and wood but no lamb, so he asked his father where the sacrifice was. Abraham's response is both heartbreaking and faith-filled:

"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."
Genesis 22:8

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar, arranged the wood, bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar. Just as Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven,

"Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."
Genesis 22:12

God did indeed provide a sacrifice — a ram caught in a thicket — and Abraham named that place "The Lord Will Provide."

When we surrender our entire lives and everything we hold dear as a complete and unreserved act of worship to God, we can trust that he will faithfully provide us with exactly what we need.

This story teaches us several key aspects of worship:

Worship as Submission: True worship means aligning our will with God's, even when difficult.

Yielding and Offering: We must be willing to offer everything to God, holding nothing back.

Eliminating Distractions: Worship requires clearing away anything that competes for our loyalty to God.

Surrendered Posture: Having "loose hands" spiritually, ready to release or receive as God directs.

Attentiveness to God's Voice: Being tuned in to God's guidance and correction.

In the context of recovery, these principles take on a whole new meaning. Addiction often involves holding tightly to substances and behaviors that have become idols in our lives. Corrie Ten Boom once said, "I have learned to hold all things loosely so God will not have to pry them out of my hands." Worship calls us to loosen our grip on these false comforts and fully trust God.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- The word worship is used for the first time in Scripture in Genesis 22:5, when Abraham described his obedience as worship. What does this teach us about the true meaning of worship? How is it different from how we usually think of worship (like music or church services)?
- Abraham was asked to give up what was most precious to him—his son Isaac. What might God be asking you to surrender as an act of worship? How does worship involve sacrifice in your own life?
- Abraham obeyed God early the next morning without recorded debate or delay. What does his response teach us about worship and obedience? What keeps us from responding to God this way?
- Abraham told Isaac, "God Himself will provide the lamb." What does this reveal about faith in the middle of sacrifice? How have you experienced God's provision when you trusted Him in a difficult situation?
- Corrie Ten Boom said, "I have learned to hold all things loosely so God will not have to pry them out of my hands." What are some things you've been holding onto tightly? What would it look like to open your hands in worship and let God have control?
- Addiction often involves clinging to false comforts. Worship is surrendering them to God. How does this story of Abraham challenge you to let go of the "idols" in your life and trust God to provide what you really need?

Crystal's Story

Crystal's life was marked by chaos and addiction from an early age. "I would be found on my neighbor's lawn, passed out. She would drag me home." Abandoned by her mother—a heroin addict who died before Crystal's 17th birthday—she turned to meth, lost in a cycle of self-destruction. Beneath the addiction was a deeper pain. "All of that—the drugs, the lifestyle—was just a cover for the emptiness I felt inside." She had endured deep wounds, including abuse from someone close to her family. At 18, she looked in the mirror and heard a voice whisper, *You're going to end up just like her*. It was a sobering realization, but she didn't yet see that God had a plan to rewrite her story.



When she walked through the doors of Teen Challenge, she was lost in every way. She nearly walked away, but the Holy Spirit stopped her. "I remember getting ready to walk off that campus, but I felt God say, *If you leave, you won't be able to come back*." That moment of surrender changed everything. As she stayed, God's Word redefined her identity. "The Lord just began to tell me, *You need to know what my Word says about who I am and who you are in Me*." Through worship, discipleship, and faith, the anger, pain, and emptiness that once consumed her life gave way to healing and hope.

Today, Crystal is a testimony of God's restoration. She graduated from Teen Challenge, went on to Bible training, and now lives a full life with her husband and three children. What once seemed like an inevitable path of destruction has become a testimony of redemption. "This whole journey hasn't been easy, but it's been so worth it. *So worth it*. I wouldn't change anything."

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What does worship mean to you personally? How has your understanding of worship changed as you've progressed in your recovery journey?
- Reflect on the story of Abraham and Isaac. Have you ever felt God asking you to surrender something important to you? How did you respond?
- What resonated with you most about Crystal's story?

Worship as a Lifestyle



Worship isn't confined to a church service or a particular time of day. It's meant to be a lifestyle, an ongoing posture of the heart. Romans 12:1 encourages us to offer our bodies as "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God," describing this as our "true and proper worship."

Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century monk, shows us what it means to live a life of worship.

Whether cooking meals or washing pots in the monastery kitchen, he performed each task joyfully, seeing it as an opportunity to commune with God. He called this "practicing the presence of God," transforming even the most mundane chores into acts of worship.

In the framework of recovery, this means:

1. **Daily Surrender:** Each day, we choose to submit our will to God's.
2. **Obedience:** As 1 Samuel 15:22 reminds us, obedience is better than sacrifice. Our daily choices to follow God's way rather than our own impulses are acts of worship.
3. **Gratitude:** Cultivating thankfulness, even in difficult circumstances, is a powerful form of worship.
4. **Service:** When we serve others, we're serving Christ (Matthew 25:40). This can be a beautiful expression of worship.
5. **Worship in Community:** Designed to be a worshipping community, the Body of Christ thrives when its members encourage, strengthen, correct, uplift, and comfort one another. This essential fellowship cannot occur if we do not come together.

When we cultivate a lifestyle of worship, we're learning to live by the Spirit, or "practice the presence of God." As we consciously invite the Holy Spirit's guidance in every situation, we align ourselves more closely with God's will. The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16, 22-23 that when we live by the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit becomes evident in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

This fruit of the Spirit stands in stark contrast to the destructive patterns of addiction. As we practice living by the Spirit, we break old habits and cultivate new, life-giving ones.

Worship and Community

Worship is more than just a song we sing; it's an act of surrender, an offering of our hearts, and a declaration that God is our ultimate treasure. As St. Augustine reminds us, "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." For those struggling with addiction and the idols that take God's place in our lives, true freedom begins when we bow before the Lord in genuine worship, finding rest in Him alone. But this journey isn't meant to be walked alone. In community, we are empowered to break free from these chains, replacing the false gods of addiction with the overwhelming love of Christ. It is in the fellowship of a Godly, worshipping community that we find the support and encouragement needed to live a life of purpose and freedom, where our hearts can finally rest in the One who made us.

- **The Power of Community Worship:** We were never meant to fight these battles alone. In a community of Godly worship, we find support, accountability, and encouragement as we pursue a life free from addiction and full of God's presence.

- **Surrender in Worship:** True worship invites us to surrender all—our desires, our pain, and even the addictions that enslave us. It is in laying everything at Jesus' feet that we begin to experience His transforming power. But we don't surrender alone. In a Godly community, we find strength, encouragement, and accountability to continually surrender as others support us in worship and walk with us on this journey of transformation.

- **Breaking Free from Idols:** Addictions, like idols, distort our priorities and steal our devotion. In worship, we dethrone these false gods and allow Christ to take His rightful place as the highest King in our hearts. Only when Christ reigns supreme can we receive the grace to break free and live in true freedom.



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Romans 12:1 calls us to present our bodies as “living sacrifices” as true worship. What does it mean for you to live as a “living sacrifice” day to day? What might that look like in your recovery journey?
- Brother Lawrence turned ordinary tasks into acts of worship by “practicing the presence of God.” How can you invite God into the small, everyday moments of your life? What ordinary task could you turn into worship this week?
- Worship means surrendering our will and obeying God in the daily choices we make. What area of your life requires fresh surrender today? How can obedience to God become an act of worship in that area?
- Living by the Spirit produces fruit like love, peace, and self-control—opposites of addiction's destruction. Which fruit of the Spirit do you most need God to cultivate in your life right now? How can prayer and worship help you grow in that?
- We weren't meant to fight battles alone; community strengthens and supports us. How has worshipping in community encouraged you? Who in your life could you invite into your journey of worship and recovery?
- Addiction and idols take God's rightful place in our hearts. Worship restores Him as King. What “idols” or false comforts have competed for your devotion? What would it look like to dethrone them and let Christ reign fully in your heart?

Alabaster Jar

As we cultivate a lifestyle of worship, God will begin to change us from the inside out. Psalm 16:11 tells us that there is fullness of joy in God's presence. As we focus on God's greatness and goodness, our perspective shifts. The things that once held us captive begin to lose their power.

Consider the woman with the alabaster jar in Mark 14:3–9. This woman, moved by love and gratitude, poured out expensive perfume on Jesus' feet. Some criticized her actions as wasteful, but Jesus saw it as beautiful worship:

"While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor.' And they rebuked her harshly.

'Leave her alone,' said Jesus. 'Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.'"

A biblical scholar, William Lane, explains why this is so significant:

“Early in the first century, Pliny the Elder remarked that ‘the best ointment is preserved in alabaster.’ The value of the perfume, and its identification as nard, suggests that it was a family heirloom that was passed on from one generation to another, from mother to daughter.”

This woman was offering a precious family heirloom, possibly her most valuable possession.

The image of the broken jar carries deep symbolism. It reminds us that even in our brokenness, God can bring about His glory. Just as the fragrance filled the room when the jar was shattered, our acts of surrender can release something beautiful that impacts others. By breaking the jar, the woman also broke with tradition, choosing her devotion to Jesus over societal norms and family expectations.





This moment reminds us of what Evangelist Vance Havner once said: *“God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume. It is Peter, weeping bitterly, who returns to greater power than ever.”*

Though the perfume had been passed down through generations, the woman decided to spend this valuable inheritance in an act of worship. **Worship and surrender have the power to break your long-standing cycles of addiction and create a new legacy for your family and the generations to come.** Just as Havner’s words reflect the transforming power of brokenness, it is in our moments of deepest surrender that God can use us to bring forth new life, greater strength, and a lasting legacy for those who follow.

As followers of Jesus, we are invited to leave behind our old ways of living and embrace a new life centered on Him and His ways. Like breaking the alabaster jar, surrendering old habits or relationships may feel like a costly decision. These are often things we've held onto for a long time, passed down through family, or formed as coping mechanisms. But as we offer them to Jesus, we make room for His love.

Worship isn't about holding back or playing it safe. It's about pouring out our lives in love and devotion to God, trusting Him with even our most vulnerable places. As we discover this kind of worship, the old patterns of addiction and dysfunction start to lose their grip, replaced by the newness and freedom that comes with living for Christ.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- The woman with the alabaster jar broke a valuable family heirloom to worship Jesus. What “family heirlooms” (traditions, habits, or beliefs) might you need to break to worship God fully?
- What does the story of the alabaster jar teach us about the connection between surrender and worship? How can we apply this in areas of our lives that are hard to let go of?
- What “idols” or distractions might be hindering your worship? What steps can you take to dethrone them and allow Christ to reign supreme in your heart?
- How does the image of brokenness in the alabaster jar reflect God’s ability to use our surrender to create beauty and impact others?

Worship and Identity

One of the most life-changing parts of living a life of worship is how it shapes our identity. As we consistently turn our attention to God, acknowledging His worthiness and dependence on Him, we see ourselves differently.

1 Peter 2:9 describes believers as “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession.” Can you confidently say this about yourself? There may have been a time in your life when you were labeled an “addict” or a “failure,” but that is not who you are anymore! As we worship, we're continually reminded of who we truly are in Christ — what a gift!

If you've been waiting for a change that will last, this is where you have to start. When we see ourselves as God's beloved children, chosen and set apart for His purposes, it becomes easier to leave behind old patterns and embrace our new life in Christ.

The Power of Praise

While worship encompasses our whole lives, there's still a special place for verbal praise and adoration of God. The psalms are filled with exhortations to praise God, regardless of our circumstances.

Praise has several powerful effects:

Perspective Shift: When we praise God, we're reminded of His greatness, and our challenges are put into perspective.

“Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. ... When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?”
Psalms 8:1, 3–4 (NIV)



Spiritual Warfare: Praise can be a weapon against darkness and oppression.

“May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples”.

Psalms 149:6–7 (NIV)

Joy: As we praise God, we often find our own spirits lifted.

“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”

Psalms 16:11 (NIV)

Community: Corporate praise unites us with other believers, reminding us we're not alone in our journey.

“How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! ... For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.”

Psalms 133:1, 36 (NIV)

Strength in Difficult Times: The Psalms often show praise as a response to hardship and remind us who holds our future in His hands.

“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”

Psalms 42:11 (NIV)

Remembrance of God's Faithfulness: Praise often involves recounting God's past faithfulness, which strengthens our faith for present challenges.

“Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.”

Psalms 103:2–4 (NIV)

Incorporating regular praise into daily life — through music, prayer, or simply speaking out God's attributes — can be a powerful tool for maintaining our focus and finding the strength to keep going.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Praise reminds us of God's greatness and puts our challenges in perspective (Psalm 8). When you intentionally praise God, how does it shift your perspective on the problems you face?
 - When King Jehoshaphat's army faced a powerful enemy (2 Chronicles 20), they worshiped their way into battle, and God fought for them. What would it look like for you to face your own battles with worship instead of fear?
 - In 2 Chronicles 20 God told His people, "The battle is not yours, but mine." What battles are you still trying to fight in your own strength? How can worship help you surrender them to God?
 - Psalm 149 describes praise as a weapon. Have you ever experienced praise breaking heaviness, temptation, or oppression in your life? What does this teach you about its spiritual power?
 - Psalm 16:11 says God fills us with joy in His presence. How has praising God brought you joy or lifted your spirit, even in difficult times?
 - Psalm 133 highlights how unity in worship brings God's blessing. What is different about praising God in community compared to praising Him alone? How has it encouraged you in your walk?
 - Psalm 42:11 shows praise as an act of hope in dark times. How can choosing to praise God when you feel downcast change the way you respond to hardship?
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Break in the Journey

Worship in Spirit and Truth

In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, there's a conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman, and it takes place at a well in the heat of the day. This wasn't a chance meeting; Jesus had intentionally traveled through Samaria and arrived at this well at precisely this time.

"Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?'"

John 4:4-7

The woman Jesus met was carrying more than just her water jar. She bore the weight of shame, rejection, and a tarnished reputation. She had done things in her past that made her an outcast in her community. This is why she came to draw water at noon, the hottest part of the day, when she was least likely to encounter others who might judge or shun her.

But Jesus was waiting for her. This simple fact reveals something beautiful about the heart of God: **He meets people right where they are.** Jesus, the Son of God, went out of His way to encounter this woman whom society had erased, who was hidden behind years of sin and shame. **He sees those who feel unseen, seeks those who are lost, and waits for those who are running away.**



When Jesus began to speak with her, He did something remarkable. He asked her for a drink of water. This simple request broke through multiple cultural barriers — Jews didn't associate with Samaritans, and men didn't typically speak to women in public. But Jesus wasn't concerned with societal norms; He was concerned with this woman's heart.

As their conversation unfolded, Jesus gently but directly confronted the woman with the truth about her life. He said to her:

“Go, call your husband and come back,’ ‘I have no husband,’ she replied. Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.’”

John 4:16-18

Notice how He did this, not to shame her or condemn her, but to demonstrate that He knew her completely and still chose to speak with her. The same is true for all of us today: He knows everything about us, including the parts we try to hide, and He loves us anyway.

Jesus didn't dwell on the woman's past or shame her for her mistakes. Instead, He used this moment to teach her about true worship. He told her:

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

John 4:23-24

This statement must have been revolutionary for the woman. In her culture, worship was about being in the right place (the temple) and performing the right rituals. But Jesus said true worship isn't about a location or a set of practices. It's about connecting with God in spirit (with our whole heart and soul) and in truth (based on a true understanding of who God is).

Jesus went on to reveal to her that He was the Messiah, the one who could offer her “living water” that would satisfy her deepest thirst forever. He said:

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
John 4:13-14

This is a powerful metaphor that echoes God's words in Jeremiah 2:13: “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

How often do we, like the woman at the well, look to other sources for life and fulfillment? We try to quench our thirst with relationships, achievements, substances, or experiences. But Jesus offers us something far better. He offers us a relationship with Him that satisfies our deepest longings.

The story doesn't end with the woman's personal encounter with Jesus. Amazingly, this outcast became a witness to the gospel! The Bible tells us:

“Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.”
John 4:28-30

This transformation is the power of an encounter with Jesus. When we truly meet Him and begin to worship in spirit and truth, we can't help but be changed. Our past no longer defines us, and our shame no longer controls us. We find a new identity as children of God and a new purpose as witnesses to His love and grace.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- How does the story of the Samaritan woman resonate with your own experience? In what ways has Jesus met you in your brokenness?
- Jesus offered the Samaritan woman “living water.” What are you currently looking to for satisfaction in your life? How might turning to Jesus instead affect your recovery?

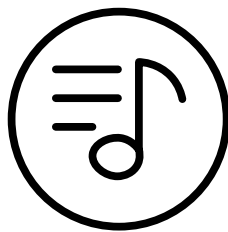
The Power of Worship and Surrender in Life's Darkest Moments

Horatio Spafford was no stranger to life's harsh realities. A successful attorney and real estate investor, he faced devastating blows, losing a fortune in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. As if that weren't enough, he suffered the heartbreak of burying his beloved four-year-old son, taken too soon by scarlet fever.

Seeking solace, Horatio planned a family vacation to England, believing it would lift their spirits. He sent his wife, Anna, and their four daughters ahead on a ship, intending to join them after wrapping up some urgent business. But tragedy struck: the ship collided and sank in the Atlantic, claiming the lives of over 200 souls, including all four of Spafford's precious daughters. Anna survived, sending a telegram that chilled Horatio to the bone: "Saved alone. What shall I do?"

Heartbroken and desperate, Horatio set sail for England, grappling with unimaginable grief. During the voyage, the captain summoned him to the deck, revealing they were passing over the very spot where the shipwreck occurred.

In that moment of deep sorrow, something miraculous happened. As Horatio reflected on his daughters, words of hope and comfort surged within him. He wrote them down, and those words transformed into a powerful hymn:



*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll—
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to know,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*





Although life is often marked by turmoil and grief, we have the ability to worship even in our despair. Through deep faith in a loving God and unwavering trust in His grace, we can boldly state, “It is well, it is well with my soul,” embracing the peace that accompanies our worship in times of trial. Robert Webber underscores the meaning of this when he says, “Worship is an it-is-well-with-my-soul experience.”

- **Embracing Grief in Worship:** Spafford’s journey teaches us that worship can be a powerful response to grief, allowing us to express our sorrow while seeking comfort in God’s presence.
- **Finding Strength in Surrender:** His story emphasizes that surrendering our pain to God enables us to experience His grace, showing us that we can find hope amid despair.
- **Proclaiming Hope in Adversity:** “It Is Well with My Soul” serves as a reminder that, despite life’s hardships, our faith in God’s love allows us to declare peace and wholeness, even when our circumstances seem overwhelming.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Horatio Spafford wrote *It Is Well with My Soul* in the midst of devastating loss. How does his story challenge the way you think about worship during seasons of grief or hardship? What would it look like to bring your sorrow to God in worship?
- Spafford’s hymn shows how surrendering deep pain to God can bring peace. What pain are you holding onto right now that God may be inviting you to surrender in worship?
- Robert Webber said, “Worship is an it-is-well-with-my-soul experience.” Do you see worship more as an expression of joy, or as a place to bring both grief and hope? How might embracing both make your worship more authentic?
- Spafford turned his darkest moment into one of the most enduring hymns of faith. If you were to write your own “It Is Well” song today, what words of trust, surrender, or hope would you want to declare to God?

A Call to Worship

We were created for worship. This isn't a burden. It's an invitation — an invitation to experience the fullness of life that comes from being in right relationship with our Creator.

A lifestyle of worship redirects our focus from our struggles to our Savior. It reminds us of our true identity. It provides a positive outlet for our emotions and energies. And most importantly, it connects us deeply with the One who has the power to bring true healing and freedom.

As you move forward, consider how you can incorporate more worship into your daily life and more fully invest your time in being a vital part of a Godly community. This might involve setting aside specific times for prayer and praise, being more mindful of God's presence throughout your day, or finding ways to serve others as an expression of love for God.

Every step toward God in worship is a step away from the strongholds of addiction. As you cultivate a lifestyle of worship, you're fulfilling your deepest purpose and experiencing the abundant life God has for you.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Brother Lawrence practiced the presence of God in everyday tasks. How can you incorporate worship into your daily routines? How can being around others who live out worship daily help you grow in this practice?
- Discuss a time when praise helped shift your perspective on a difficult situation. What did you learn from this experience?
- How has focusing on God's attributes (His love, power, faithfulness, etc.) helped you in times of temptation or struggle?
- Reflect on 1 Peter 2:9. How does seeing yourself as “chosen” and part of a “royal priesthood” contrast with how you've seen yourself in the past? How might embracing this identity impact your recovery journey?
- In what areas of your life do you find it most challenging to surrender to God's will? How can worship help in these areas?
- How can we as a group encourage and support each other in cultivating lifestyles of worship?
- What's one specific way you plan to prioritize worship in your life this week?



Verses to Reflect On This Week

- "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." John 4:23 (NIV)
- "Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love Isaac and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.'" Genesis 22:2 (NIV)
- "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me." Mark 14:6 (NIV)
- "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13-14 (NIV)
- "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." Romans 12:1 (NIV)
- "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Galatians 5:16 (NIV)
- "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)
- "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." Psalm 42:11 (NIV)
- "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)
- "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Psalm 16:11 (NIV)
- "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." Jeremiah 2:13 (NIV)
- "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)
- "With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:6-8 (NIV)
- "But the king replied to Araunah, 'No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.' So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the Lord answered his prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped." 2 Samuel 24:24-25 (NIV)

Notes

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Leader's Guide: Chapter 6 –

From Brokenness to Restoration: Trusting God to Heal Your Deepest Hurts

Chapter Summary

Chapter 6 is a powerful invitation to bring our wounds before a healing God who not only sees our pain but draws near to restore and redeem it. Whether our brokenness stems from trauma, abandonment, abuse, or regret, God's love is strong enough to heal even our deepest hurts. This chapter walks us through stories of biblical restoration—like Joseph, Mephibosheth, and Peter—and reminds us that God's healing often happens through faith, forgiveness, and the support of a loving community.

Healing is a process, not an event. It requires us to acknowledge our pain, invite God into our brokenness, walk in forgiveness, and lean on others who reflect Christ's compassion. Through the power of Jesus, what once felt beyond repair becomes the starting point of a new, transformed life.

Key Principles

1. **God Is Our Healer – Jehovah Rapha** – Exodus 15:26; Psalm 147:3
2. **Faith Invites God's Healing Power** – Mark 5:25-34; Matthew 9:22
3. **God's Love Redeems Our Past** – Romans 8:38-39; Isaiah 61:3
4. **Healing Often Happens Through Community** – James 5:16; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10
5. **Forgiveness Frees Us to Move Forward** – Ephesians 4:32; Psalm 32:5

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 6

Step 1: Introduce God's Healing Nature

Explore names of God like Jehovah Rapha, El Roi, and Immanuel. Use Psalm 34:18 and Jeremiah 30:17 to reassure participants that God sees and cares for every wound.

Step 2: Faith that Heals

Walk through Mark 5:25-34, emphasizing the woman's faith in touching Jesus' garment. Invite reflection on how faith, even if small, is powerful in our healing journey.

Step 3: God's Love Reaches Every Hurt

Reassure participants using Romans 8:38-39 that nothing can separate us from God's love. Encourage them to bring their pain into the light of Christ's love.

Step 4: Healing from Betrayal and Abandonment

Use Joseph and Mephibosheth's stories to show God's redemption after betrayal. Discuss forgiveness and trusting God to restore.

Step 5: Healing After Failure

Use John 21:15-19 and Psalm 32:5 to show how Jesus restored Peter. Encourage honest confession and self-forgiveness.

Step 6: Healing Through Community

Reinforce the power of godly community through James 5:16, Galatians 6:2, and Proverbs 27:17. Build a safe and supportive group environment.

Step 7: Practical Steps Toward Healing

Review the “Steps Toward Healing” section as a guide for long-term transformation. Encourage participants to be patient and consistent.

Simple Teaching Moments

- God Sees You, Even in the Pain
- Your Faith, No Matter How Small, Moves the Heart of God
- Nothing You’ve Done Can Separate You from God’s Love
- Forgiveness Is a Pathway to Freedom
- Healing Is a Journey—Take the Next Step

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What can we learn from the woman who touched Jesus' garment about faith and healing?
- How do the stories of Joseph or Mephibosheth reflect God's ability to redeem painful pasts?
- How have you experienced God's love reaching into a broken area of your life?
- Are there past choices or regrets you find difficult to forgive yourself for?
- Which of the “Steps Toward Healing” feels most challenging to you, and why?
- What does forgiveness look like in your journey, and how can we walk through that together?
- How can we create safe spaces in our community for others to be vulnerable and heal?
- What’s one specific way you can take a step toward healing this week?

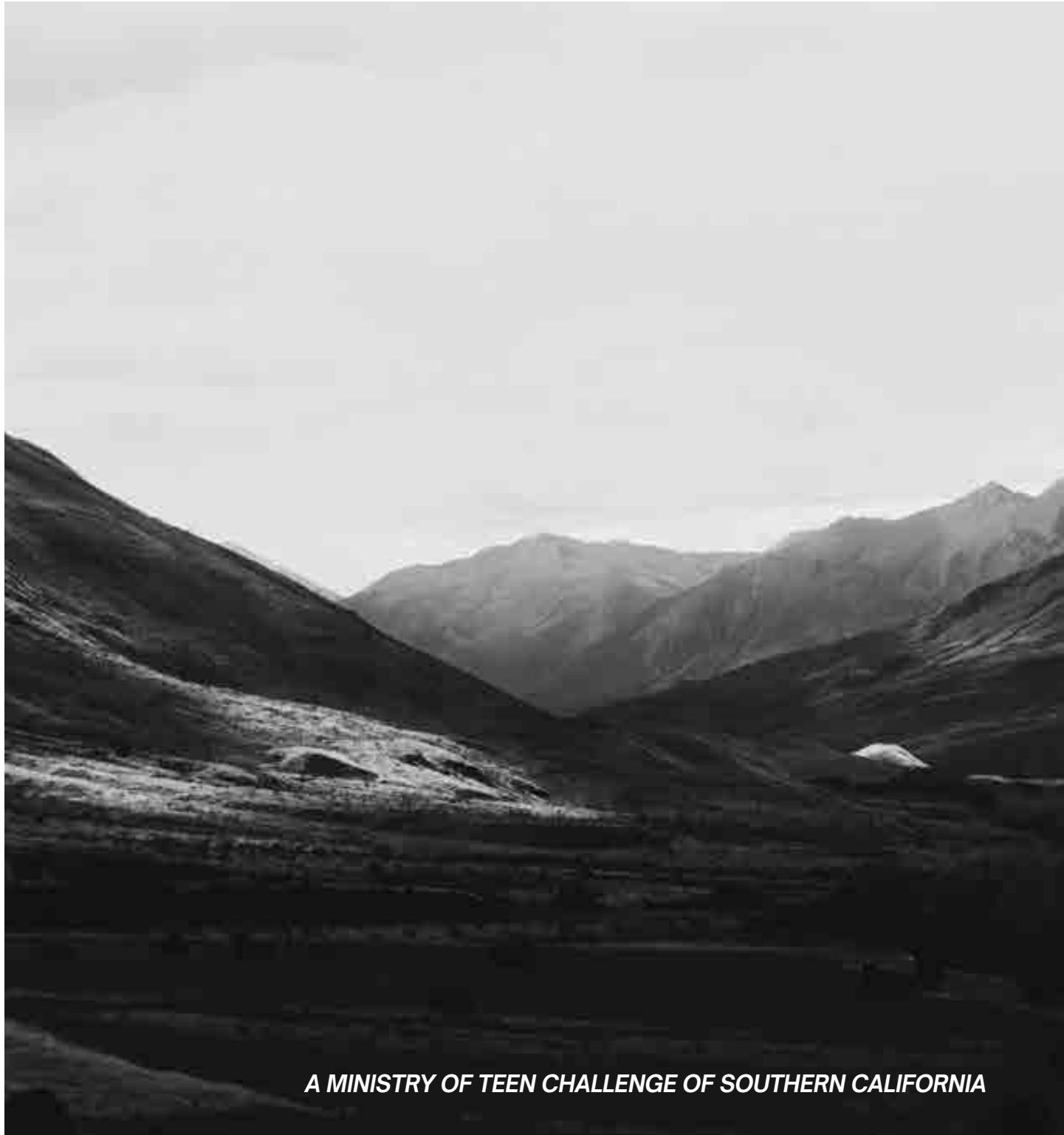
This chapter is a deep well of encouragement for anyone struggling with pain, regret, or past trauma. As you lead others through it, remind them that healing is not about rushing but about trusting. God is gentle, present, and committed to restoring every broken place with His love and power.

Chapter 6:

**FROM BROKENNESS TO RESTORATION:
TRUSTING GOD TO HEAL YOUR DEEPEST HURTS**



A NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CURRICULUM SERIES



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Chapter 6:

From Brokenness to Restoration: Trusting God to Heal Your Deepest Hurts

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

Psalms 147:3

We all carry wounds. Some are visible, like scars on our skin, while others are hidden deep within our hearts. These wounds can come from various places — our own mistakes, the actions of others, or the brokenness of the world around us. These wounds can run deep, stemming from experiences of abuse, betrayal, or profound loss.

John Eldredge puts it this way,

“Somehow we have overlooked the fact this treasure called the heart can also be broken, has been broken, and now lies in pieces down under the surface. When it comes to habits we cannot quit or patterns we cannot stop, anger that flies out of nowhere, fears we cannot overcome, or weaknesses we hate to admit—much of what troubles us comes out of the broken places in our hearts crying out for relief. Jesus speaks as if we are all brokenhearted. We would do well to trust His perspective on this.”

No matter the origin of our pain, God’s promise remains the same: He is Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. In this chapter, we’ll explore how God’s love, working through His Word and His people, can bring healing and restoration to our deepest hurts.



The God Who Heals

Throughout Scripture, we see God revealing Himself as a healer. In Exodus 15:26, He declares, “*I am the Lord who heals you.*”

This promise from God isn’t just about physical health but also our spiritual well-being. He is our healer, both in body, mind, and soul. He has promised to heal our hearts and forgive our sins, offering us a wholeness that goes far beyond just physical healing.



Consider these powerful verses about God’s healing nature:

God sees our pain: “You have seen my troubles, and you care about the anguish of my soul.” (Psalm 31:7b NLT)

God is close to the brokenhearted: “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)

God promises to restore: “I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,” declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 30:17a)

God’s love is the foundation of our healing: “But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture.” (Malachi 4:2 NLT)

God’s healing touch restores us to the fullness of who He created us to be. As David Wilkerson beautifully expressed:

When you are deeply hurt, no person on this earth can shut out the innermost fears and deepest agonies. The best of friends cannot really understand the battle you are going through or the wounds inflicted on you. Only God can shut out the waves of depression and feelings of loneliness and failure that come over you. Faith in God’s love alone can salvage the hurt mind. The bruised and broken heart that suffers in silence can be healed only by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, and nothing short of divine intervention really works.

Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself through various names, each highlighting a different aspect of His character. In Hebrew thought, a name was closely linked to a person’s nature and character. Whenever God revealed a new name for Himself, He invited His people into a deeper understanding of His nature and promises.

Many of these names appear in the Old Testament in Hebrew, often combining “Jehovah” (or “Yahweh”), meaning “The Existing One” or “Lord,” with a descriptor of a particular attribute of God. Others use “El,” meaning “God,” in combination with a descriptor. In the New Testament, we see names like “Immanuel,” which bridge the Old and New Covenants, revealing how God’s character remains constant while drawing nearer to us through Jesus.

Understanding these names can deepen our trust in God’s ability and desire to bring healing to our lives. As we meditate on them, we gain a more complete picture of who God is and how He wants to work in our lives.

Here are some examples of names of God used in the Bible:

- Jehovah Rapha – The LORD That Heals (Exodus 15:26). God is not just a healer of physical ailments but of our emotions and spirits as well.
- El Roi – The God Who Sees Me (Genesis 16:13). We are not unseen or forgotten. God sees all of us, including our hurts, and He cares about us deeply.
- Jehovah Shalom – The LORD Is Peace (Judges 6:24). In the midst of our turmoil and pain, God offers His perfect peace.
- Jehovah Shammah – The LORD Is There (Ezekiel 48:35). God is present with us in our suffering, never leaving us alone in our pain.
- El Shaddai – Lord God Almighty (Genesis 17:1). There is no wound too deep or situation too complex for God’s almighty power to heal and restore.
- Jehovah Tsidkenu – The LORD Our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6). When shame threatens to overwhelm us, God clothes us in His righteousness.
- Jehovah Mekoddishkem – The LORD Who Sanctifies You (Exodus 31:13). God is continuously at work, making us holy and whole.
- Immanuel – God With Us (Matthew 1:23). In every step of our healing journey, God is with us, walking alongside us.
- Jehovah Sabaoth – The LORD of Hosts (1 Samuel 1:3, Psalm 46:7). God is the commander of heaven’s armies, fighting on behalf of His people. When we feel outnumbered, weak, or overwhelmed, He reminds us that the battle belongs to Him, and His power is greater than any force that comes against us.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- In Exodus 15:26, God reveals Himself as Jehovah Rapha — the Lord who heals you. What does it mean to you personally that God’s healing is not just physical but also emotional and spiritual? Where in your life do you most need His healing right now?
- Psalm 31:7 reminds us that God sees our troubles and cares about the anguish of our souls. How does it comfort you to know that God sees the pain no one else sees?
- David Wilkerson wrote that only faith in God’s love can heal the deepest hurts of the mind and heart. What lies or wounds do you need to surrender to God’s love so His Spirit can bring true healing?



A Touch of Faith

Maybe you're carrying something heavy today—a wound, a heartache, a deep brokenness that feels like it will never heal. In Mark 5:25-34, there's a story of a woman who had been suffering for far too long. So long that she was absolutely desperate. She had suffered from a bleeding condition for 12 long years, which in her culture made her unclean and separated her from others. In many ways, her condition was a picture of our sin—it keeps us isolated, unclean, and in need of a Savior.

She had spent all her money on doctors and tried every remedy she could find—everything from local herbs to expensive treatments—but nothing worked. Instead of getting better, she only got worse. And isn't that how it feels when we try to fix ourselves? We try to be good enough, to work harder, and to follow all the rules, but without Jesus, nothing really changes. In fact, sometimes, we feel even more distant from God when we rely on our own efforts.

But then she heard about Jesus. He had healed others, even those with impossible conditions like hers. She knew if she could get close enough to touch His clothes, she could be healed. So, despite her weakness and the crowd around Him, she pushed through:

“She came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.’ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.”

Her touch was small—just the hem of His garment—but it was filled with faith.

The moment she touched Him, her bleeding stopped. She could feel in her body that she was healed, completely and immediately. Jesus felt it too, knowing that power had gone out from Him. He stopped, turned around, and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” It wasn't that He didn't know (Jesus always knows), but He wanted to acknowledge her faith. Trembling, the woman came forward and told Him everything.

Jesus knows our deepest needs, even when we approach Him in quiet desperation. He never turns us away. Sometimes, like this woman, we feel unworthy or afraid. But just as Jesus called her forward, He invites us to come to Him, no matter our past or how long we’ve struggled. When we reach out in faith, even in the smallest way, He responds with healing, restoration, and grace.

This woman’s encounter with Jesus transformed her life, much like our encounters with Him change us. We, too, can find freedom from the things that have held us back for so long. Jesus is not just a distant figure—He is here, waiting for us to reach out in faith, no matter how small that faith might feel.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- How can we encourage each other to trust in God’s healing when facing deep emotional or spiritual wounds?
- What can we learn from the story of the woman who touched Jesus’ garment in Mark 5:25-34 about the role of faith in our healing journey?
- What are some areas of brokenness or pain in your life that you need to bring before God for healing?
- Have there been times when you tried to heal yourself or relied on your own efforts instead of turning to God? What was the outcome?
- How does understanding the different names of God (like Jehovah Rapha or El Roi) deepen your trust in His ability to heal your deepest hurts?



Break in the Journey

The Healing Power of God's Love

Life has a way of derailing us. Sometimes, it's the things we've done; other times, it's the things done to us. In those moments, it's easy to feel distant from God, to wonder if His love still reaches us. It feels like you're not only derailed but you've been knocked off course completely without a way to get back. Maybe you've been through something so painful that you've asked yourself, "Can God still love me after this?"

If that's where you are today, may you be reminded of this: Nothing can separate you from God's love. No mistake, no heartache, no wound goes deep enough to pull you out of His reach. Paul makes it clear in Romans 8:38-39:

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The life-altering power of God's love is at the core of our healing journey. His love reaches into the deepest, most shattered places of our hearts, breaking the chains of addiction, pain, and defeat. It doesn't matter what we've done or what was done to us — God's love can free us from the prison of the past.

Blaise Pascal once said,

"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

Jesus came to bridge the gap that sin created between us and God. Through His sacrifice on the cross, He made a way for us to be healed, restored, and made whole.

This love is active, pursuing, and deeply personal. Just as Jesus stopped to heal the woman with the blood issue, He stops for you. Your pain matters to Him, and your healing is important to Him.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- How have you seen God's love reach into a broken area of your life?
- Why do you think it's often hard to believe that "nothing can separate us from God's love" (Romans 8:38-39)?



Break in the Journey

Healing from Betrayal and Abandonment

We are created to love and be loved—it's a deep part of who we are. But life gets messy when we look for love in the wrong places. This search can leave us feeling hurt, broken, or even lost. Sometimes, the wounds we carry run even deeper because people we trusted have betrayed or harmed us through abuse, neglect, or mistreatment.

The most painful scars often come from those who should have protected and nurtured us. Scripture gives us stories of people who faced these kinds of betrayals but found healing through God's unwavering faithfulness.

Look at Joseph in Genesis 37. His own brothers, out of jealousy, threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery. Imagine how easily he could've sunk into bitterness, believing he'd been abandoned forever. But God had a greater purpose—through those trials, Joseph rose to a place of influence and saved his family and the nation of Egypt.

Then there's Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel. As a child, his nurse dropped him while running in fear, leaving him disabled for life. That injury changed the course of his future, all because someone meant to care for him failed. But years later, King David welcomed Mephibosheth into his palace and gave him a seat at the king's table, restoring the dignity he had lost.

These stories push us to ask: Who has "dropped" you? Who hurt you or left you feeling abandoned when you needed them most? These wounds—whether caused by a parent, spouse, friend, or someone in authority—can run deep. They may come from childhood trauma, betrayal in marriage, or rejection by those you trusted. And while that pain is real, God's love is real, too.

Joseph's rise from betrayal and Mephibosheth's place at the king's table remind us that God specializes in restoring what others have broken.

He longs to lift you from whatever pit you find yourself in and welcomes you into a place of healing and belonging.

If you've experienced abuse or betrayal, know this: **It wasn't your fault.** The pain you carry isn't yours to bear alone, and God's heart aches for the hurt you've endured. His love reaches into those dark places, offering healing for wounds inflicted by the abuse of love or power.



God's love doesn't erase the past, but it can redeem and restore it. He turns pain into purpose, scars into strength, and wounds into wisdom. Moving toward healing doesn't mean pretending the hurt never happened. It means letting God's love bring beauty from the ashes of your experiences.

Healing is a journey, and seeking help—whether through counseling, support groups, or pastoral care—is not a sign of weakness. Surround yourself with people who will walk with you, listen without judgment, and cover you in prayer.

Your past doesn't define who you are or where your story ends. God is still writing your future, and He makes all things new. As you lean into His love, may you experience the truth of Isaiah 61:3: that He gives beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. **You have a seat at His table, and in Him, there is healing, hope, and new beginnings.**

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- Joseph and Mephibosheth faced betrayal and abandonment but found healing in God's faithfulness. How do their stories resonate with your own experiences?
- How do you see God's hand at work in turning painful situations, like Joseph's betrayal or Mephibosheth's injury, into opportunities for redemption?
- Have you experienced a situation where God transformed a hurtful experience into something that led to growth or a deeper understanding of His love?
- Joseph could have chosen bitterness over forgiveness. How can we guard our hearts against bitterness when we've been betrayed by those we trust?
- What practical steps can you take to release feelings of anger or resentment toward those who have hurt you?



Beyond Regret: Experiencing Forgiveness and Healing

In John 21:15-19, we see a powerful example of how Jesus offers restoration to those who have failed Him, even when our actions have deeply wounded others. Peter, who once boldly declared he would never abandon Jesus, denied Him three times on the night of His arrest. These denials must have cut deeply into Jesus' heart, as Peter, one of His closest disciples, chose self-preservation over loyalty. Afterward, Peter likely struggled to forgive himself, carrying the weight of his betrayal. But when the risen Jesus appeared to Peter, He didn't avoid the pain or the failure; instead, He addressed it directly. Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?"—each question mirroring Peter's three denials. **This wasn't to condemn him but to create a pathway for healing and restoration, inviting Peter to confront his guilt and begin anew.**

Maybe you find yourself here now—struggling with the weight of shame and regret over choices you wish you could undo, feeling trapped by the past and unable to move forward. Often, when we have harmed others, the hardest step is forgiving ourselves, especially when the pain we've caused feels too great to bear. Psalm 32:5 reminds us of the freedom that comes when we bring our failures into the light:

"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the guilt of my sin."

Jesus' interaction with Peter shows that true restoration requires us to face our mistakes, not hide from them. By giving Peter the chance to affirm his love three times, Jesus replaced each denial with a declaration of devotion. It was a way to release Peter from his shame, **demonstrating that God's grace can reach even the places where our self-condemnation feels strongest.** Jesus then called Peter to act on this new beginning, saying, "Feed My sheep," and inviting him to "Follow Me." This shows us that when we confront our failures honestly and allow God to heal our hearts, **He can turn our deepest regrets into opportunities for purpose and a renewed calling.**

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- In John 21:15-19, how did Jesus address Peter's denial, and what does this teach us about the process of restoration and forgiveness?
- How can openly acknowledging our mistakes, as described in Psalm 32:5, impact our journey toward healing and self-forgiveness?
- What steps can we take as a community to support someone who is struggling to forgive themselves for past mistakes?
- Are there past choices or mistakes that you struggle to forgive yourself for? How might Jesus' approach with Peter help you to see a way forward?
- When you think about bringing your regrets into the light, as Psalm 32:5 describes, what fears or challenges arise for you?
- How would your life change if you began to release feelings of shame and embrace the grace and restoration that God offers?



Break in the Journey

Healing Together

Love and connection are at the heart of who we are, but the reality of life means we often encounter pain, betrayal, or loss along the way. Whether it's childhood neglect, rejection by a loved one, or the trauma of abuse, these experiences will leave us feeling isolated and scarred. Yet, even in the midst of such brokenness, there is hope. Healing begins with God but often happens through the people He places around us.

We were never meant to carry our pain alone. God works through community to restore and renew us, creating space for growth, vulnerability, and belonging. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says it this way: *"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."*

When we lean into the community God provides, we find healing through:

Safe spaces for vulnerability. In James 5:16, we're reminded to *"confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* True healing happens when we let down our walls. A godly community provides the safety needed to be honest about where we've been and what we're carrying. Vulnerability—being truly seen—can feel risky, especially for those with a history of betrayal. But in the right relationships, it becomes the foundation for healing.

Encouragement and emotional support. The journey toward healing is not linear; it has peaks and valleys. In times of discouragement, we need people who will remind us of God’s faithfulness. As 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, *“Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”* Having others believe in us when we can’t believe in ourselves can help us keep going when we feel stuck.

Practical help and burden-sharing. Healing often requires practical support. Galatians 6:2 tells us to *“carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* This might look like a friend stepping in when life feels overwhelming, a counselor guiding us through trauma, or a mentor offering wisdom. When we let others walk alongside us, we experience God’s care in tangible ways.

Accountability for growth and transformation. Moving on from our issues doesn’t necessarily mean we’ve healed. Healing involves growth as well. Proverbs 27:17 reminds us, *“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”* Trusted friends and mentors can gently challenge us to pursue health and wholeness, pointing us back to God when we lose focus. They hold us accountable, not with shame, but with love, helping us continue moving toward healing.

For those who have endured deep trauma—especially experiences like sexual abuse— the presence of a compassionate community is even more vital. Trauma can make trust feel impossible, but healing happens within the safety of loving relationships. Through these connections, we learn to trust again, experience a love that reflects God’s heart, and rediscover our worth.

Being surrounded by a healthy, Christ-centered community reminds us that we don’t have to walk through healing alone. It’s a space where our pain is seen, and our worth is affirmed, where we can stumble without fear of judgment and rise again with the help of others. This is the beauty of God’s design for the Church: a family who points us to healing in Him and embodies His love in real, practical ways.

No matter what you’ve been through or how heavy your burdens feel, God sees you, loves you, and offers healing through His people. As you open yourself to community, may you experience the truth of Isaiah 61:3: that God exchanges ashes for beauty, mourning for joy, and heaviness for praise. Healing is possible, and you don’t have to find it on your own—God has placed people around you to help carry you toward wholeness.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says two are better than one because one can lift the other up. When have you experienced someone “lifting you up” in a difficult time? How can you be that person for someone else today?
- Galatians 6:2 tells us to carry one another’s burdens. What burdens are you carrying that you’ve tried to handle alone? Who could you allow to help you?
- Isaiah 61:3 promises God will trade mourning for joy and heaviness for praise. What area of your life feels like “ashes” right now? How might God use community to exchange it for beauty and hope?



Steps Toward Healing

Healing is a process, not a quick fix. It's a journey that unfolds in layers, with both progress and setbacks. But step by step, God brings restoration. If you've experienced deep wounds, you don't have to figure everything out at once—healing takes time, grace, and intentional steps forward. Here are some steps to consider as you walk this path:

1. Acknowledge the Wound

Ignoring pain only buries it deeper. As John Eldredge once said, *"A wound that goes unacknowledged and unwept is a wound that cannot heal."* Healing begins with honesty. Take time to name your pain—to recognize the ways you've been hurt and how it has affected you. Bring this to God without holding back. He isn't afraid of your questions, your anger, or your sorrow. The psalmists model this kind of raw honesty, showing us that lament is not a sign of weakness but of faith—faith that God hears and cares.

2. Invite God into Your Pain

God's healing begins where we let Him in. You don't need all the answers or understand everything to invite Him into your hurt. Simply ask for His presence. Pray for His love to meet you right where you are, even in the places that feel too broken to fix. The promise of Psalm 34:18 is that *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* You're not alone in your pain. God is near, even when He feels far away.

3. Seek Godly Counsel

You were never meant to walk this journey by yourself. Healing often requires support from others who can offer wisdom and guidance. This might look like talking to a trusted pastor, joining a Christian support group, or working with a counselor who can help you process trauma in light of God's truth. Proverbs 11:14 reminds us that *"where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."* Don't hesitate to reach out.

4. Practice Forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not about excusing or minimizing what happened—it's about releasing the weight of what others have done so you can move forward. Carrying the burden of resentment only ties you to the pain. Forgiveness is choosing to hand the offender over to God, trusting Him to bring justice and healing. Ephesians 4:32 encourages us to *"be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."* Forgiveness is often a process, not a one-time decision, so give yourself time to work through it.

5. Embrace Community.

Healing happens best in the context of relationships. Even though it might feel vulnerable, allow others to walk with you. Let trusted friends, family, or church members offer love and support. Colossians 3:13 reminds us to *"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* Community reminds us that we are not alone, and being seen, heard, and loved by others reflects God's love in powerful ways.

6. Meditate on God's Promises.

God's Word is truth and a source of comfort and renewal. Take time to meditate on His promises, allowing them to sink deep into your heart. When doubt and discouragement creep in, return to verses like Isaiah 41:10: *"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."* His Word offers peace that transcends the storm and hope that anchors you through uncertainty.

7. Be Patient with the Process.

Healing doesn't happen overnight. It takes time, and there will be moments when you feel stuck or tempted to give up. Be gentle with yourself. Growth often happens in small, quiet steps that may not feel significant at the moment. But over time, these steps add up to transformation. Remember Philippians 1:6: *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* Trust that God is at work, even when progress feels slow.



God isn't intimidated by your pain, your doubts, or even your anger. He invites you to bring it all to Him—the unanswered questions, the frustrations, and the broken pieces of your heart. You don't have to pretend everything is fine. He's not asking for perfection—He's asking for your trust. And as you place your brokenness in His hands, He promises to make all things new.

Revelation 21:5 reminds us of this truth: "He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" No matter how deep the hurt, God's love has the power to restore what was lost, repair what was shattered, and bring beauty from the ashes of your life. Keep walking forward—one step at a time—and trust that He is leading you toward healing, wholeness, and renewal!

One Last Reminder

Your brokenness is not the end of your story. God specializes in taking what's broken and creating something beautiful. He is inviting you to trust Him with your healing, to surrender your wounds, and to let His love work where nothing else can.

As you continue this journey, remember that you are deeply loved by a God who sees you, knows you, and is committed to your restoration. And you are surrounded by a community of believers who, though imperfect, are called to be the hands and feet of Christ in your life.

May you experience the truth of Psalm 30:11 in your own life: "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy."



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- Which of the "Steps Toward Healing" do you find most challenging? Why?
- How does the concept of forgiveness impact your healing journey? What makes forgiveness difficult, and how can we work through those challenges?
- Reflect on a time when God's Word provided comfort during a painful period. Which verses or passages were particularly meaningful?
- How can we create a safe space within our community for people to be vulnerable about their pain and struggles?
- In what ways has your understanding of God's healing power changed or deepened through this chapter?



Verses to Reflect on This Week

- "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm 147:3 (NIV)
- "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18 (NIV)
- "But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds," declares the LORD, "because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares." Jeremiah 30:17 (NIV)
- "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)
- "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." Mark 5:34 (NIV)
- "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." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIV)
- "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)
- "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2 (NIV)
- "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians." 3:13 (NIV)
- "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)
- "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6 (NIV)
- "He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" Revelation 21:5 (NIV)
- "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." Psalm 30:11 (NIV)
- "I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten." Joel 2:25 (ESV)

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Leader's Guide: Chapter 7 –

When the Storm Rages: Waiting for the Whisper of God

Chapter Summary

This chapter invites participants to discover how God speaks, strengthens, and transforms us in life's most difficult storms. Using the story of Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4 and Elijah hearing God's voice as a whisper in 1 Kings 19, we see that storms are not evidence of God's absence but often the setting where He reveals Himself most intimately. Whether it's addiction, grief, regret, or broken identity, God calls us to trust Him, wait on Him, and listen for His whisper. In the storm, we learn stillness. In the waiting, we grow in faith. And in the whisper, we hear God's voice speaking identity, healing, and purpose.

Key Principles

1. **God Is with Us in the Storm** – Mark 4:35–41; Isaiah 41:10
2. **Waiting on God Is Active Trust** – Psalm 37:3–7; Lamentations 3:25–26
3. **God Often Speaks in a Whisper** – 1 Kings 19:11–12; John 10:27
4. **Transformation Happens in the Waiting** – Isaiah 43:18–19; Ephesians 4:22–24
5. **Faith Requires Stepping Out of the Boat** – Matthew 14:22–33

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 7

Step 1: Recognize the Storm

Read Mark 4:35–41 and discuss the stages of the storm. Help participants identify the storms they're facing and the emotional toll it's taking.

Step 2: Wait on God in the Midst of the Chaos

Explore what biblical waiting looks like. Share Psalm 37, Psalm 40, and the story of King Saul (1 Samuel 13). Ask: How can we cultivate patience and surrender?

Step 3: Listen for God's Whisper

Use 1 Kings 19 and the story of Elijah to show how God often speaks in a still, small voice. Lead a time of quiet reflection or journaling to help participants listen.

Step 4: Share Personal Testimonies

Read or watch Pastor Woody Robinson's and Elizabeth Goodban's stories. Reflect on how God spoke to them during their storms and what changed.

Step 5: Trust God's Timing

Discuss how transformation unfolds over time. Use Isaiah 43:18–19 and Ephesians 4:22–24. Lead participants in identifying areas where they're being transformed.

Step 6: Take a Step of Faith

Use the story of Peter walking on water to challenge participants to step out of their comfort zone and trust God, even when it's scary.

Step 7: Declare Faith over Fear

Close with a time of declaration, reading the "Faith says..." list aloud. Invite group members to choose one statement they'll hold onto this week.

Simple Teaching Moments

- The Storm Does Not Mean You're Off Course
- God Often Speaks in a Whisper, Not a Shout
- Faith Grows Strongest in the Waiting
- Even in Doubt, Jesus Says 'Come'
- Your Pain Doesn't Disqualify You—It Prepares You

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Which stage of the storm from Mark 4 do you most identify with today?
- What does "waiting on God" look like for you personally? Where are you struggling to be still and trust Him?
- What fears or lies tend to drown out God's voice in your life?
- How do the stories of Woody and Elizabeth encourage you to keep waiting and listening?
- Have you ever stepped out in faith like Peter? What happened, and what did you learn?
- Which "Faith says..." declaration speaks most to your current season? Why?

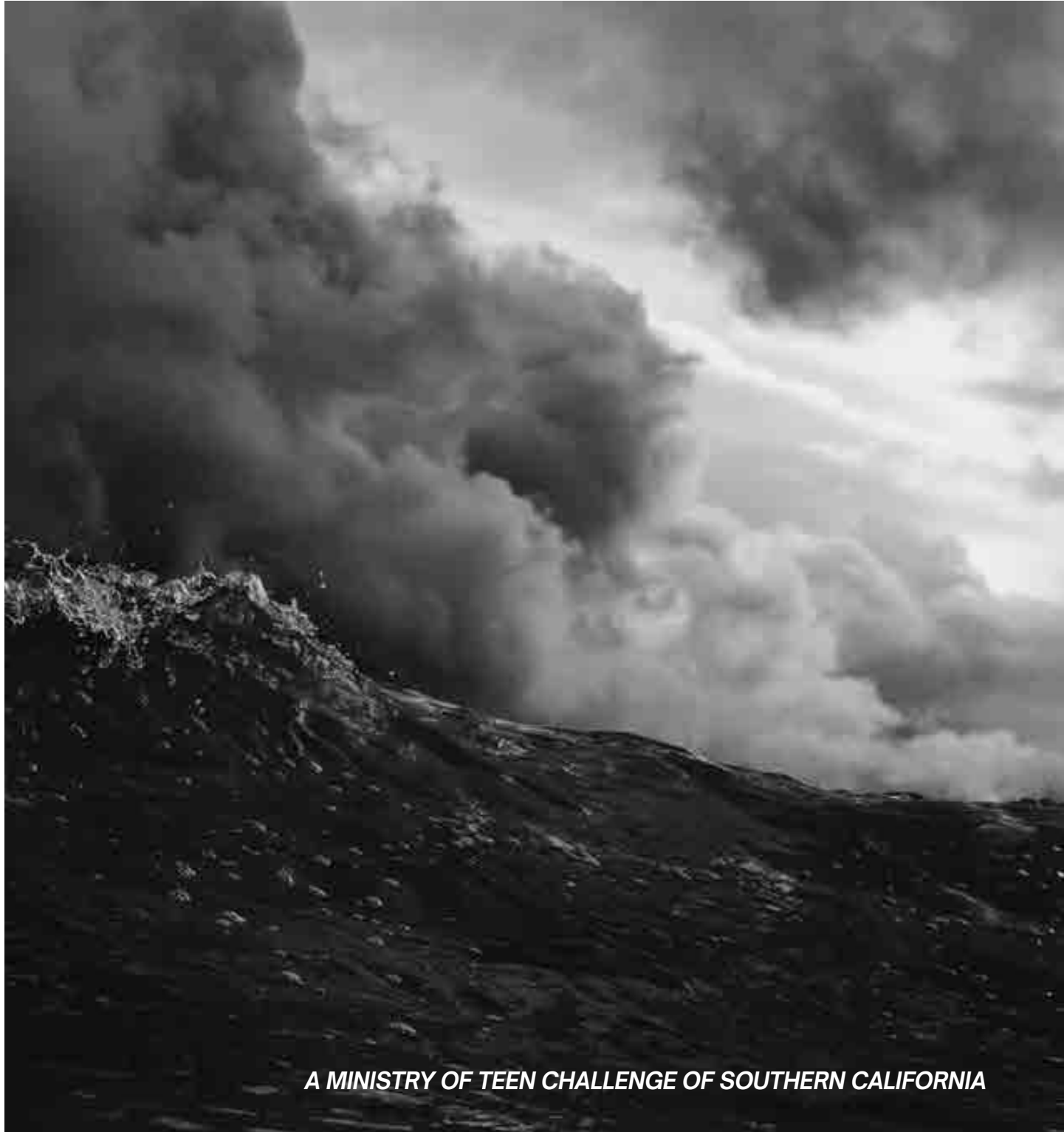
This chapter is a call to trust God in the storm, to wait for His whisper, and to believe that even in your most painful seasons, He is working something new within you. Storms will come—but they are not the end of your story. As you learn to be still, to listen, and to step out in faith, God will meet you with peace, direction, and transformation. Just as He calmed the waves for the disciples, He will speak into your chaos with a voice that brings healing, purpose, and hope. And when you rise from the storm, your life will be a beacon—testifying to others that the One who whispers in the wind is faithful to restore all that's been broken.

Chapter 7:

WHEN THE STORM RAGES: WAITING FOR THE WHISPER OF GOD



A NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CURRICULUM SERIES



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Chapter 7:

When the Storm Rages: Waiting for the Whisper of God

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

Psalms 46:10

Life is full of storms. For those of us battling addiction, these storms can feel particularly overwhelming, threatening to sweep away hard-won progress and hope. But it's in these very storms and the waiting that follows that God can do a work within us. He begins to undo the lies that addiction has cemented and invites us to trust Him for a freedom we haven't yet fully experienced.

In these moments, learning to wait on Him and listen for His voice is key to surviving the storm and emerging stronger on the other side. In this chapter, we'll explore how to face life's storms with faith, develop a heart posture of waiting on God, and tune our ears to hear His whisper even in the midst of chaos. Through it all, we'll see how God uses these challenging seasons to break the chains of addiction and transform us into beacons of hope for others.

The Anatomy of a Storm

To understand how to weather life's storms, let's look at an example from Scripture. In Mark 4:35-41, we see Jesus and His disciples encounter a furious storm on the Sea of Galilee:

The Invitation (Mark 4:35-36)

“That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.”

It's important to note that this journey was originally Jesus' idea. He invited the disciples into the boat, knowing what lay ahead. Sometimes, the storms in our lives directly result from following God's lead. This doesn't mean He's abandoned us or that we've made a mistake. But He may use the storm to teach, strengthen, or prepare us for what's ahead.

The Sudden Squall (Mark 4:37)

“A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.”

Life's storms often come without warning. One moment, everything seems calm, and the next, you're fighting to stay afloat. This might look like an unexpected trigger or a moment of intense craving that threatens to undo your progress. The key is to remember that sudden storms don't mean you've failed or that God has forgotten you.

The Sleeping Savior (Mark 4:38a)

“Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.”

In the midst of the chaos, Jesus was asleep in the boat. This might seem strange at first, but it demonstrates His complete trust in the Father's care. When we're in the middle of a storm, it can sometimes feel like God is distant or unconcerned with our struggles. But just as Jesus was present in the boat, God is always with us, even when we can't sense His active involvement.

The Desperate Cry (Mark 4:38b)

“The disciples woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, don't you care if we drown?’”

The disciples' reaction is deeply human. In their fear, they cry out to Jesus, questioning whether He cares about their plight. It's okay to be honest with God about our fears and doubts. In fact, even in their desperation, the disciples demonstrated faith by turning to Jesus for help.

The Powerful Word (Mark 4:39)

“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.”

With a simple command, Jesus calms the storm, showing His authority over all creation. No matter how fierce the storm is in our lives, God has the power to bring peace and stillness.

The Gentle Rebuke (Mark 4:40-41)

“He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’”

Storms have a way of uncovering the true condition of our faith. When life is smooth, it's easy to feel confident in God, but when chaos hits, we quickly discover where our trust in Him stands strong—and where it falters. These moments act like a spiritual check and show us the areas where we need to grow.

The disciples had been with Jesus for some time, yet they were still growing in their understanding and trust of Him. Developing faith is a lifelong process, with each storm giving us a new opportunity to deepen our relationship with God and walk with him through deeper waters.

God doesn't let these storms go to waste. Just as the disciples grew closer to Jesus by experiencing His power in the storm, our challenges can deepen our relationship with Him. Through hardships, we understand God's presence and character in ways we wouldn't have otherwise.



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

- In Mark 4:35-41, Jesus invites the disciples into a storm. How does knowing that God sometimes leads us into challenging situations change the way you view your own struggles, especially with addiction or personal battles?
 - Follow-up: How might embracing this perspective help you trust God more during difficult times?
- The disciples' desperate cry, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" reflects the fear and uncertainty that often arise during life's storms. When have you experienced a time when God felt distant in your struggle? How did you see His presence or intervention later on?
 - Follow-up: How can moments of perceived silence from God teach us about patience and trust in His timing?
- Think about a "storm" you're currently facing in your life. Which stage of Mark 4:35-41 do you most relate to right now?
- Have you ever felt like God was "asleep" during a difficult time in your life? How did you respond?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus invites us into the boat, knowing storms may come?

Pastor Woody Robinson's Story

During life's storms, when it feels like the wind and waves are overwhelming, it's easy to believe that our past mistakes and wrong choices define our future. Yet, it's precisely in these moments of uncertainty and fear that God's whisper cuts through the noise, reminding us of His unchanging love. As Woody Robinson, a Teen Challenge alumnus, now an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God and a pastor in Southern California, says,

There's a God in heaven that loves you, even though you've made a lot of mistakes and even though you've made some bad choices, it's not over. God still has a plan for your life.



Woody's story of transformation is a testament to this truth. He once did drugs, sold drugs, and lived amidst the dangers of street violence, but God's whisper of hope reached him in the darkest places. That same whisper is there for us when the storm rages—reminding us that God has not given up on us, even when we feel most lost. His whispers come not just to calm the storm around us but to remind us of the purpose He still holds for our lives. When the waves rage, His voice urges us to give our hearts to Him, to trust that *"He's got so much more that He wants to do in and through you."*

Waiting for the whisper of God means holding onto hope, knowing that His love remains steadfast even when everything else feels uncertain. Just as Woody encourages, in the middle of the storm, we're invited to give our lives back to the One who calms the seas, trusting that *"It's not over."* The storm may rage, but God's whisper speaks of a future and a purpose beyond what we can imagine.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- After hearing Pastor Woody Robinson's miraculous story, what resonated with you most about God's work in his life?
- Woody shared how God's whisper of love reached him in the darkest places. When life feels overwhelming, what "whispers" from God give you hope and remind you that He hasn't given up on you?
- Woody said, "Even though you've made mistakes and bad choices, it's not over. God still has a plan for your life." How does this truth speak to your own story? What does it mean for you to believe that God still has a plan, even after failure?

Waiting on God in the Storm

When life feels chaotic, our first instinct is often to take matters into our own hands. Yet, Scripture invites us to approach these moments differently—through trust and patient waiting on God. This isn't passive resignation but an active choice to rely on His faithfulness while continuing to live with purpose.

Psalm 37:3-7 paints this picture: *“Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.”* It reminds us to slow down, stay grounded, and wait with expectation for God's work to unfold.

Psalm 40:1-3 offers hope for what comes from waiting. The psalmist testifies that God heard his cry, lifted him from the depths, and gave him a new foundation to stand on—a transformation so profound it filled him with praise. Similarly, Psalm 84 speaks of the “valley of Baca,” a place of weeping that becomes a place of refreshment. **We'll need to pass through our own valleys of weeping, but as we wait on God and trust in Him, He can transform even these painful places into sources of strength and hope.**

Waiting on God can cultivate several essential qualities in our lives:

- **Patience:** In a world of instant gratification, addiction often seeks quick fixes. Waiting on God teaches us to delay gratification and trust in His timing.
- **Trust:** As we wait, we learn to trust God's character even when we can't see His hand at work.
- **Surrender:** Waiting requires us to let go of our need for control and surrender our will to God.
- **Renewal:** In the waiting, God renews our strength and prepares us for what's ahead.

Waiting on God is crucial. It's in these times of waiting that God begins to undo the lies that addiction has cemented in our minds, inviting us to trust Him for a life of freedom we have yet to experience.

Consider the story of King Saul in 1 Samuel 13:5-14. Faced with a daunting enemy, Saul was instructed to wait for the prophet Samuel's arrival before taking action. But as the days passed and his army began to scatter, Saul grew impatient. He took matters into his own hands, offering sacrifices that were not his to give. This act of impatience and disobedience cost Saul his kingdom.

How often do we, like Saul, rush ahead of God's timing because we're afraid or impatient? In recovery, this might look like trying to skip steps in the healing process or refusing to deal with underlying issues because it's uncomfortable. But true transformation happens in God's timing, not ours.

Psalm 37:7 encourages us: *"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes."*

This stillness before God is an active choice to trust Him even when everything around us seems to be falling apart. In this stillness, we begin to hear God's voice more clearly.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Psalm 40:1-3 describes how God lifts us from difficult places and gives us a new foundation. How have you seen God bring transformation or renewal during a season of waiting in your life?
 - Follow-up: What practices can help you remain hopeful and expectant during those times of waiting?
- Waiting on God requires patience, trust, and surrender. Which of these qualities do you find the hardest to develop, and why?
 - Follow-up: How might leaning into these qualities help change your perspective during a challenging season or a time of rebuilding?
- What does "waiting on God" look like practically in your life?
- Can you share a time when rushing ahead of God's timing caused problems in your life?
- How can we cultivate patience and trust in God's timing, especially when facing urgent challenges or strong temptations?



Break in the Journey

Listening for God's Whisper

Hearing God's voice can sometimes feel impossible in the cacophony of life's storms. Still, during these tumultuous times, we most need His guidance and comfort. Recognizing His whisper is essential to our spiritual walk, especially when everything around us feels loud and overwhelming.

After a great victory over the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 19, Elijah found himself running for his life, discouraged and afraid. God led him to Mount Horeb, where He passed by:

“Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.”

(1 Kings 19:11-12)

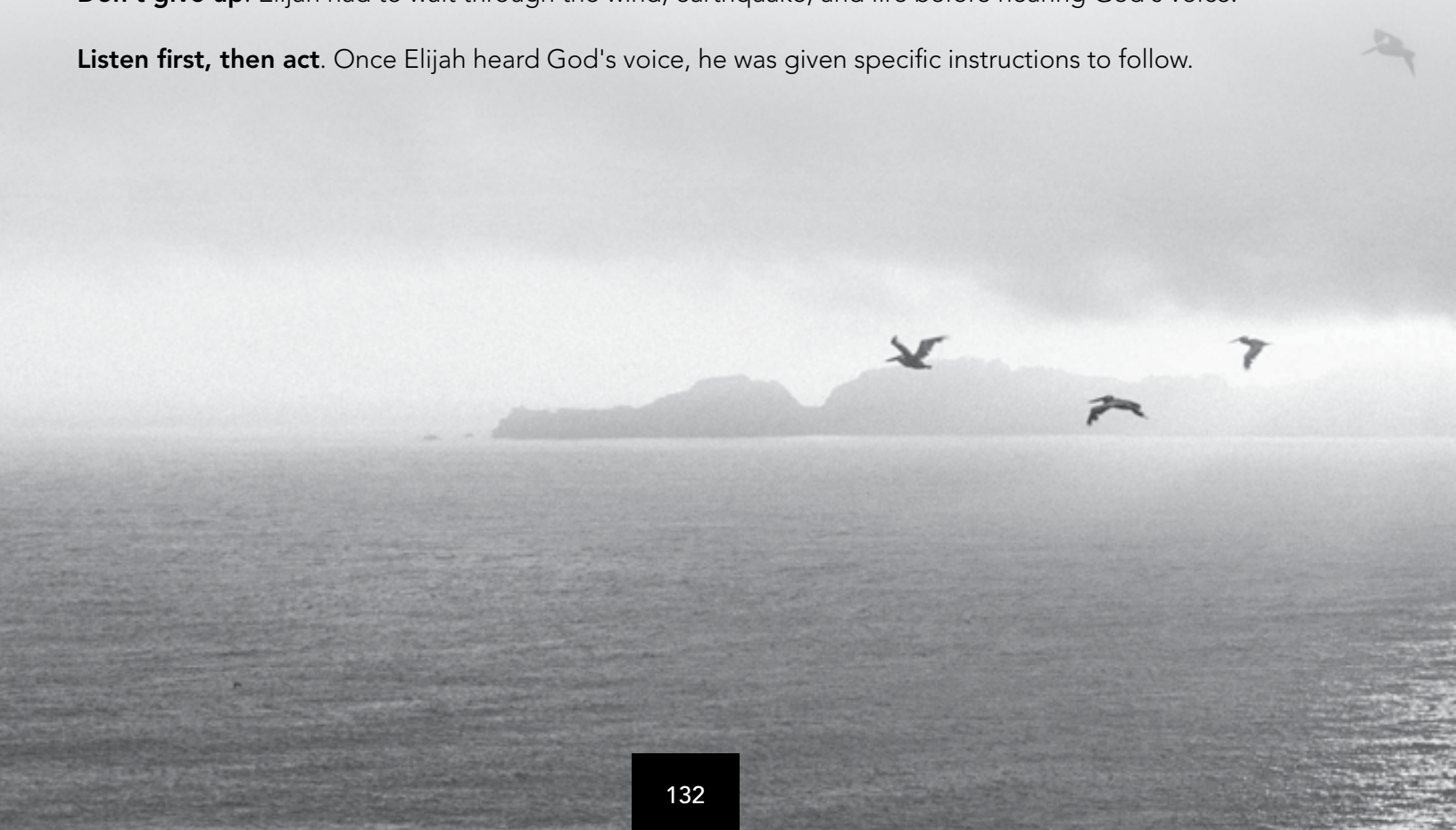
God chose to speak not in the dramatic displays of power but in a gentle whisper. This teaches us some important lessons about hearing God's voice:

You'll need to quiet the noise around you. We need to create space in our lives to listen, free from the world's noise and distractions.

God often speaks softly. His voice isn't always loud or dramatic. We need to tune our ears to hear His gentle whisper.

Don't give up. Elijah had to wait through the wind, earthquake, and fire before hearing God's voice.

Listen first, then act. Once Elijah heard God's voice, he was given specific instructions to follow.



God's voice will guide us away from temptation, comfort us in moments of weakness, and lead us into the freedom He has for us. If you haven't tried listening to His voice before, or don't feel confident that it's God speaking to you, here are some practical steps for hearing God's voice:

1. Create daily quiet time: Set aside time each day to be still before God, free from distractions.
2. Meditate on Scripture: God often speaks through His Word. As you read, ask Him to reveal His truth to you.
3. Practice awareness: Throughout your day, pause to acknowledge God's presence and listen for His guidance.
4. Join a Godly community: Sometimes God speaks through others. Being part of a community of faith can help us discern God's voice.
5. Journal: Write down what you sense God is saying. Over time, you may see patterns or gain clarity.

Jesus said in John 10:27, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."* As we consistently seek to hear God's voice, we become more attuned to His leading in our lives.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Describe a time when you felt you clearly heard God's voice. How did you know it was Him?
- What are some "loud" voices in your life that might be drowning out God's whisper?
- How can we distinguish between God's voice and our own thoughts or desires?



Break in the Journey

Elizabeth Goodban's Story

Elizabeth's story is a powerful testament to the struggle of waiting on God in the middle of life's most turbulent storms. Like many, she faced a season of brokenness, searching for meaning and stability amid chaos. Reflecting on her journey, she shares,

"I had about a year of just doing what I wanted, and then I met someone... Three months later, I was pregnant with my son at 19 ... But soon after his birth, I was just back at it again. And I felt like I was a good mom, but I wasn't really there how I should have been."

Elizabeth's storm deepened as she found herself in and out of jail, struggling with addiction and unable to care for her children. In her own words, "I knew at this point that I couldn't take care of my kids any longer... my dad and my stepmom stepped in... but such a blessing in that, that they weren't taken from me." Her identity as a mother felt stripped away, and she was left wrestling with the label of being "just a drug addict." This is the heart of the storm, where every limit she had once set for herself had been broken, and she found herself in a room full of strangers, feeling like she no longer belonged there.

But it's in this very place of brokenness, at a Teen Challenge event in Riverside, that God's whisper broke through. She recalls a moment of worship, with her hands raised high in surrender.



"I remember... I just had my hands raised high, just praising God. And I heard him tell me, 'Open your eyes.' And I looked up and all three of us [my two brothers and I] just had our hands raised to the sky, just praising the Lord. And he told me, 'These hands that you used to use for the enemy are now raised for me.'"

In that moment, Elizabeth experienced the whisper of God that brought hope and direction, transforming her from the inside out. "I think just the obedience and listening, listening to him, didn't just change my life. It changed my family's life as well." Amid her storm, she discovered that God had never abandoned her, that He had been waiting to speak words of restoration and promise. **Her story shows us that even when everything feels lost, God's whisper can bring a new identity and a new future, inviting us to trust Him with what lies ahead.**



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Elizabeth wrestled with the label of being “just a drug addict” and feeling stripped of her identity as a mother. What false labels or identities have you struggled with? How does God’s truth about who you are challenge those labels?
- In a moment of surrender, Elizabeth heard God say, “These hands that you used to use for the enemy are now raised for me.” What does this show us about God’s ability to redeem our past? How has He transformed something broken in your life for His glory?
- Elizabeth said obedience to God didn’t just change her life but her family’s life too. How can your obedience to God influence and bring healing to the people closest to you?
- God’s whisper gave Elizabeth a new identity and a new future. What new identity is God speaking over you right now? What future do you sense He is inviting you to trust Him with?

Transformation in the Waiting

As we learn to face storms with faith, wait on God's timing, and listen for His voice, we open ourselves up to deep, lasting transformation. Isaiah 43:18-19 reminds us, *"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."*

God is always at work, even when we can't see it. In the waiting, He's doing a new thing in us. He's breaking old patterns, healing deep wounds, and preparing us for a future beyond our wildest imagination. This transformation often happens in stages.

It begins with surrender as we come to the end of ourselves and yield our will to God. From there, God begins the renewal process, changing how we think and perceive the world. As we wait on Him, He heals wounds from our past that may have contributed to our addictive behaviors. We start to develop new, healthy patterns of living and thinking, growing into the people He's created us to be. Eventually, God reveals His purpose for our lives, often using our past struggles to help others who are still in the midst of their own storms.

As you can see, transformation is a process. It doesn't happen overnight, but as we consistently turn to God, wait on Him, and listen for His voice, He faithfully works in us, making us more like Christ.

Ephesians 4:22-24 encourages us, *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."*

As we allow God to transform us, we become beacons of hope for others still caught in the storm. Our lives become living testimonies to God's power to calm the tempest and bring beauty from ashes.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- In what areas of your life do you most need God's transforming work right now?
- How has God used your past struggles or addictions for good in your life or the lives of others?
- What does it mean to you to be a "beacon of hope" for others? How can you live this out practically?

Living Out Our New Life

In Matthew 14:22-33, we find Jesus inviting Peter to step out of the boat and walk on water.

Picture the scene: The disciples are in a boat, battling against wind and waves. Suddenly, they see Jesus walking on the water towards them. Peter, in a moment of both doubt and faith, calls out, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus' response is simple yet profound: "Come."

This invitation from Jesus is the essence of our faith journey. In the midst of our storms, when fear and doubt threaten to overwhelm us, Jesus calls us to come to Him. He's inviting us to trust Him more deeply than we ever imagined possible—to walk on the waters of impossibility and meet Him there.

Reflecting on this passage, David Wilkerson said,

“God reminded me of the countless miracles I have seen. I could fill pages with stories of how God has answered my prayers when I have believed him and trusted him. Then a crisis comes, and suddenly I wipe out that whole history of witnessing miracles.”

How often do we do the same? We forget God's faithfulness in the face of new challenges.

But here's the beautiful truth: Despite our moments of unbelief, Jesus still says, "Come." That is the heart of the gospel. In your trials, in your storms, in your moments of deepest doubt, the Lord is saying, "Just come to me."

When Jesus comes into our situation, everything can change. Throughout the Gospels, we see lives transformed by His presence:

- The man born blind receives his sight.
- The woman with the issue of blood is healed after 12 years of suffering.
- The paralytic walks, the leper is cleansed, and the demoniac is set free.
- Even death itself is overcome, as Jairus' daughter and Lazarus are brought back to life.

No matter what obstacles you're facing today, when Jesus comes, everything can change. The power of God is enough to transform any circumstance.

But how do we respond to this invitation? Do we stay in the boat, paralyzed by fear? Or do we step out in faith, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus?

As we mature in our faith, we're called to trust God with the simple, unwavering faith of a child. This doesn't mean blind faith but rather a deep trust in God's goodness and love, even when life is hard. It means surrendering our doubts and fears and believing God has a plan for our lives.

Even when we find ourselves in the valley of the shadow—whether it's the loss of a relationship, illness, unanswered prayer, or betrayed trust—we can take heart. Shadows are not cast in the absence of light; they remind us that light is present. Jesus, the Light of the World, walks with us even in our darkest valleys.

As we wait on the Lord, we incline our ears to hear His voice and seek to know more about who He is and who He wants us to be. In this waiting, He renews our strength and becomes our portion, our help, and our shield.

As we close this chapter, let these declarations of faith resonate in your heart:

Faith says...

- I will go wherever You call me to go.
- I surrender all of myself to You.
- There is no chain You cannot break.
- I trust You completely, at all times, with everything.
- Even when my circumstances say hope is lost, You are always good.
- Your heart beats continually to redeem and restore.
- You are always calling me deeper.
- Sometimes, You lead me into storms, but You are always in the boat.
- With man, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.
- My Good Shepherd will lead and guide me to green pastures, where I can rest and be restored.
- Your resurrection didn't happen on the first day or the second, but You rose from the grave—and so will I.
- Because I love You and am called according to Your purpose, You will work everything out for my good.
- You will make everything right in the end.
- You are worthy of it all, now and forever more.

As you face the storms of life, may you hear Jesus' invitation to "Come." May you step out in faith, keeping your eyes fixed on Him. And may you experience the transforming power of His presence in every area of your life.





Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

- **Sometimes, the storm we face is the storm of regret or rejection.** What regrets or feelings of rejection do you find yourself struggling with today? How does acknowledging these struggles open the door for God's healing work in your life?
 - Follow-up: How can you invite God into your regret or rejection, trusting Him to speak to you even when the pain feels overwhelming?
- **The storms of recovery and healing can be long and difficult.** Where have you seen progress, and where do you feel the waves are still high?
 - Follow-up: How might God be inviting you to trust His timing in your healing process, even when you don't see immediate results?
- **For family members, the storm can often be someone else's struggles that you are caught up in.** What has it been like for you to weather the storm of a loved one's addiction or recovery?
 - Follow-up: How have you seen God's faithfulness, even when the situation felt out of your control?
- **Sometimes, we face storms of broken identity and self-worth.** Have you ever felt defined by your past mistakes or failures, and how has that shaped how you see yourself?
 - Follow-up: How can God's whisper of truth reshape your identity, even when the storms of the past try to define you?
- **Looking back at our storms, we often see how God was with us all along.** Think of a past struggle where you felt abandoned or forgotten by God. How do you see that situation differently now, with the perspective of time?
 - Follow-up: How can remembering God's past faithfulness strengthen you for the storm you're currently facing?
- Reflect on a time when you felt Jesus calling you to "step out of the boat" in faith. How did you respond?
- In what areas of your life do you find it most challenging to trust God with childlike faith?
- How can you actively "wait on the Lord" in your current circumstances?
- Which of the "Faith says..." statements resonates most with you right now? Why?



Verses to Reflect on From This Chapter:

- “Be still, and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10 (NIV)
- “Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:3-4 (NIV)
- “But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)
- “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” John 10:27 (NIV)
- “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV)
- “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Romans 12:2 (NIV)
- “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Matthew 7:24 (NIV)
- “Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.” Psalm 27:14 (NIV)
- “We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.” Psalm 33:20 (NIV)
- “I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.” Psalm 130:5 (NIV)
- “The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.” Lamentations 3:25-26 (NIV)
- “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV)

Notes

A series of horizontal lines for writing, overlaid on a background image of people's hands raised in prayer.

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Leader's Guide: Chapter 8 –

Walking in the Spirit: The Path to Lasting Freedom

Chapter Summary

This chapter unpacks how true and lasting freedom comes through walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Drawing from Romans 8, the stories of Nolan and Merina, and the promise of transformation through surrender, readers are reminded that the Spirit doesn't just help us try harder—He empowers us to live a new life. From the struggle Paul describes in Romans 7 to the breakthrough of Romans 8, we see that living by the Spirit means stepping into identity, holiness, and purpose. Walking in freedom is not about perfection, but about surrender, listening, and depending on the Spirit's power every day.

Key Principles

1. **The Holy Spirit is Our Helper, Counselor, and Advocate** – John 16:7; Romans 8:26
2. **Freedom Comes Through the Spirit, Not Willpower** – Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:16
3. **There Is No Condemnation in Christ** – Romans 8:1
4. **Transformation Is a Daily Walk of Surrender** – Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:13
5. **We Walk in Freedom Together** – Ecclesiastes 4:9–10; Galatians 6:2

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 8

Step 1: Acknowledge the Struggle

Read Romans 7:15–25. Let group members share about their own cycles of defeat. Validate the struggle.

Step 2: Claim the Promise of No Condemnation

Share Romans 8:1 and discuss what it means to be free from shame. Guide a time of reflection and prayer.

Step 3: Learn to Walk by the Spirit

Break down what it means to “walk by the Spirit” in daily life. Use Galatians 5 and Romans 8. List practical ways to listen to the Spirit's voice.

Step 4: Share Testimonies of Freedom

Read Nolan and Merina's stories. Ask participants to reflect on what moments of breakthrough looked like in their own lives.

Step 5: Dethrone the Pharaohs

Use Isaiah 10:27 to speak about the “pharaohs” that keep us in bondage. Guide participants through naming what needs to be broken.

Step 6: Walk in Community

Discuss Ecclesiastes 4 and Galatians 6. Pair up participants for accountability and prayer partnerships.

Step 7: Activate the Anointing

End with a group prayer and declaration based on the Isaiah 10:27 prayer in the chapter. Invite the Spirit's presence.

Simple Teaching Moments

- **The Spirit Isn't Just Power—He's a Person**
- **You're Not Fighting Alone—You Have a Helper**
- **Freedom Isn't the Absence of Struggle, But the Presence of the Spirit**
- **You Don't Just Need to Be Forgiven—You Need to Be Filled**
- **When the Yoke Breaks, the New Life Begins**

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- Which part of Paul's struggle in Romans 7 do you relate to most?
- What has "freedom" meant to you in your journey? Has that definition changed?
- Which aspect of the Holy Spirit's role do you most need today (Helper, Advocate, Counselor, Comforter)?
- Have you ever felt God speak through the Holy Spirit in a way that helped you walk in freedom?
- What are the "pharaohs" or inner rulers you've had to surrender to God?
- How does Merina's story about the coat of righteousness shift the way you view God's love?
- In what ways have you experienced the fruit of the Spirit growing in your life?
- What does it practically mean to "walk by the Spirit" this week? Identify one action step.
- What hidden sins or footholds might you need to bring into the light?
- How can community play a bigger role in your walk with God? Who can you lean on?

This chapter is an invitation to leave behind the exhausting cycle of self-effort and enter into the Spirit-led life. As participants discover the power of the Holy Spirit, they'll find hope for real transformation. Walking in the Spirit means surrendering daily, living in freedom, and letting God's presence fill every part of who we are. This is not just about staying clean—it's about becoming new. Encourage your group to expect miracles, rely on the Helper, and remember that with God, no chain is unbreakable.

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.

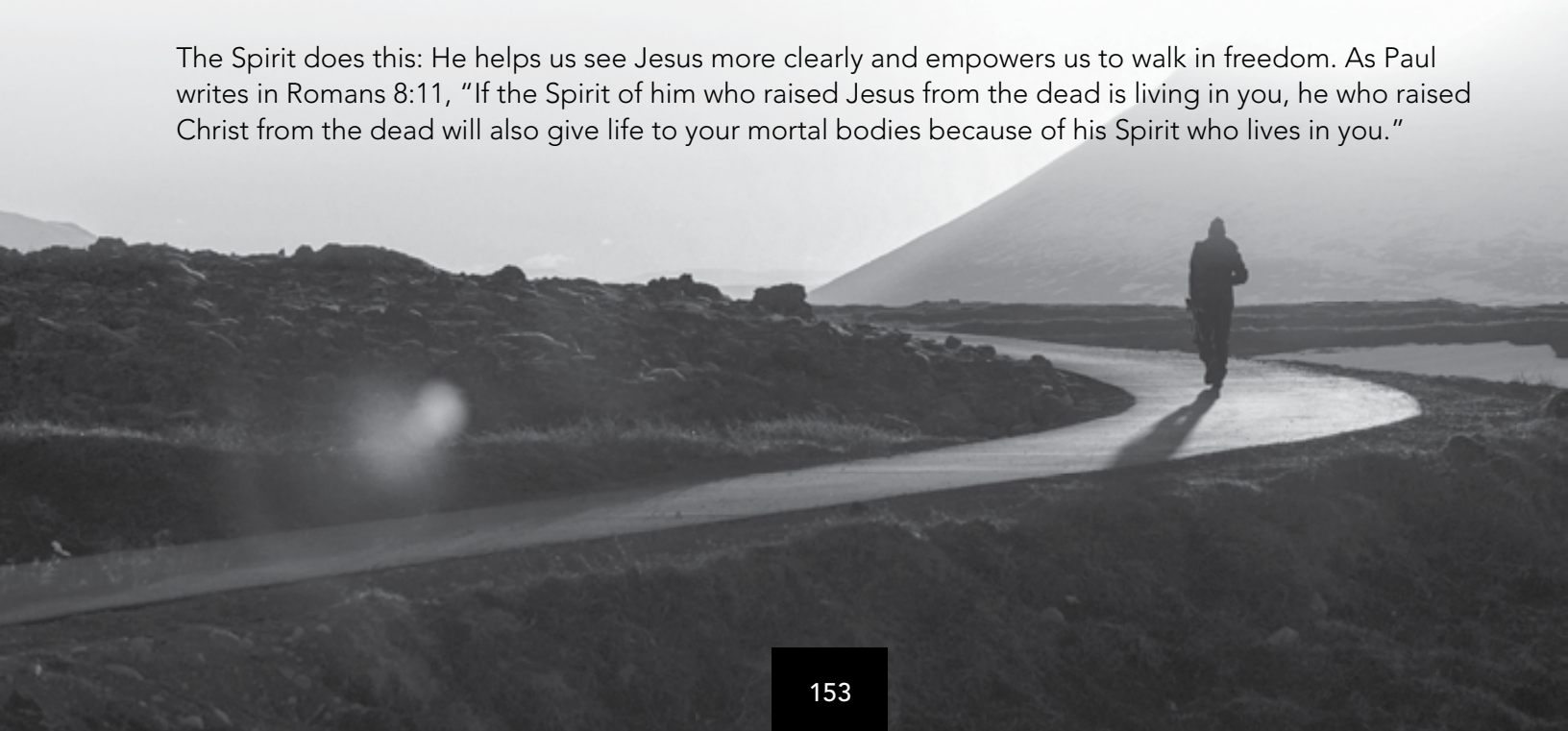
"I've always dreamed of a gentleman who'd lay down his coat so I could walk over it,"

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)

Notes

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**GET PRAYER.
GET SUPPORT.
GET HELP.**

To speak to someone
from Teen Challenge's
24/7 Prayer and Help
Line, call **888.520.0620**
right now.

Leader's Guide: Chapter 9 –

Made for More: Stepping into the New Life God Has for You

Chapter Summary

This final chapter invites participants to embrace the truth that they were created for more than addiction, shame, or failure. Drawing from Jeremiah 29:11 and stories like Lazarus' resurrection and the walk to Emmaus, readers are challenged to reimagine their future through the lens of God's restoration and purpose. The journey of healing is not just about leaving the past but about stepping fully into the new story God is writing. Recovery isn't the end; it's the beginning of a life filled with calling, identity, and destiny.

Key Principles

1. **You Were Created with Purpose** – Psalm 139:13-14; Jeremiah 29:11
2. **Your Identity Is Not Your Addiction** – 1 Corinthians 15:10
3. **Grace Restores and Empowers** – 2 Corinthians 12:9; Romans 5:8
4. **Resurrection Follows Surrender** – John 11:25-44
5. **God Leads Us into the Promised Land** – Deuteronomy 1:8; Exodus 3:7-8
6. **Jesus Walks With Us in Every Season** – Luke 24:13-35

Road Map for Journeying Through Chapter 9

Step 1: Reclaim Identity

Lead with Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 29:11. Invite participants to reflect on who God says they are. Have them write down lies they've believed and replace them with biblical truth.

Step 2: Receive Grace Daily

Unpack the idea of grace being more than a one-time gift. Reflect on Mark 9:24 and 2 Corinthians 12:9. Emphasize grace as God's ongoing strength.

Step 3: Embrace the Death and Resurrection Pattern

Discuss the Lazarus story (John 11). Highlight that God often allows things to "die" so He can bring resurrection life. Allow space for participants to share what they are surrendering.

Step 4: Step Into the Promised Land

Use Deuteronomy 1:8-21 to show that deliverance is just the beginning. Encourage participants to identify areas where God is calling them to walk forward.

Step 5: Walk with Jesus Daily

Discuss Luke 24:13-35. Encourage participants to recognize Jesus' presence in their daily walk. Share moments where Jesus has shown up unexpectedly.

Step 6: Tell the New Story

Invite each person to write or share a paragraph beginning with: "God is writing a new story in my life. Here's what it looks like so far..."

Step 7: Declare the Blessing

Close with Numbers 6:24-26 and a time of prayer. Declare life, hope, and peace over each participant.

Simple Teaching Moments

- **You Are Not a Mistake – You Are Made for More**
- **Grace Isn't Just for the Start of the Journey—It's for Every Step**
- **Sometimes God Lets Things Die to Raise Something Better**
- **The Promised Land Isn't Automatic. You Have to Walk In**
- **Jesus Is Walking With You, Even When You Don't Recognize Him**
- **You Still Have a Story to Tell**

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What lies about your identity has addiction caused you to believe? What is God saying instead?
- What "interruption" in your life revealed God's presence and grace?
- What does it mean to you that grace empowers, not just forgives?
- What parts of your old life do you sense God allowing to die?
- How can you embrace God's new life for you, even if it feels unfamiliar?
- What fears or doubts try to keep you from stepping into your "Promised Land"?
- Where have you sensed Jesus walking beside you on your recovery journey?
- How do you plan to stay connected to God and your support community after this program?
- What would your "new story" sound like if you shared it today?

This chapter closes the curriculum with hope and expectancy. The same God who brings people out of bondage invites them into blessing. Help participants see that they haven't just survived—they are being equipped to thrive. Challenge them to believe that the best is yet to come and to keep walking forward, knowing they are never alone. Encourage them to keep their eyes on Jesus, stay connected in community, and embrace the truth: They were made for more.

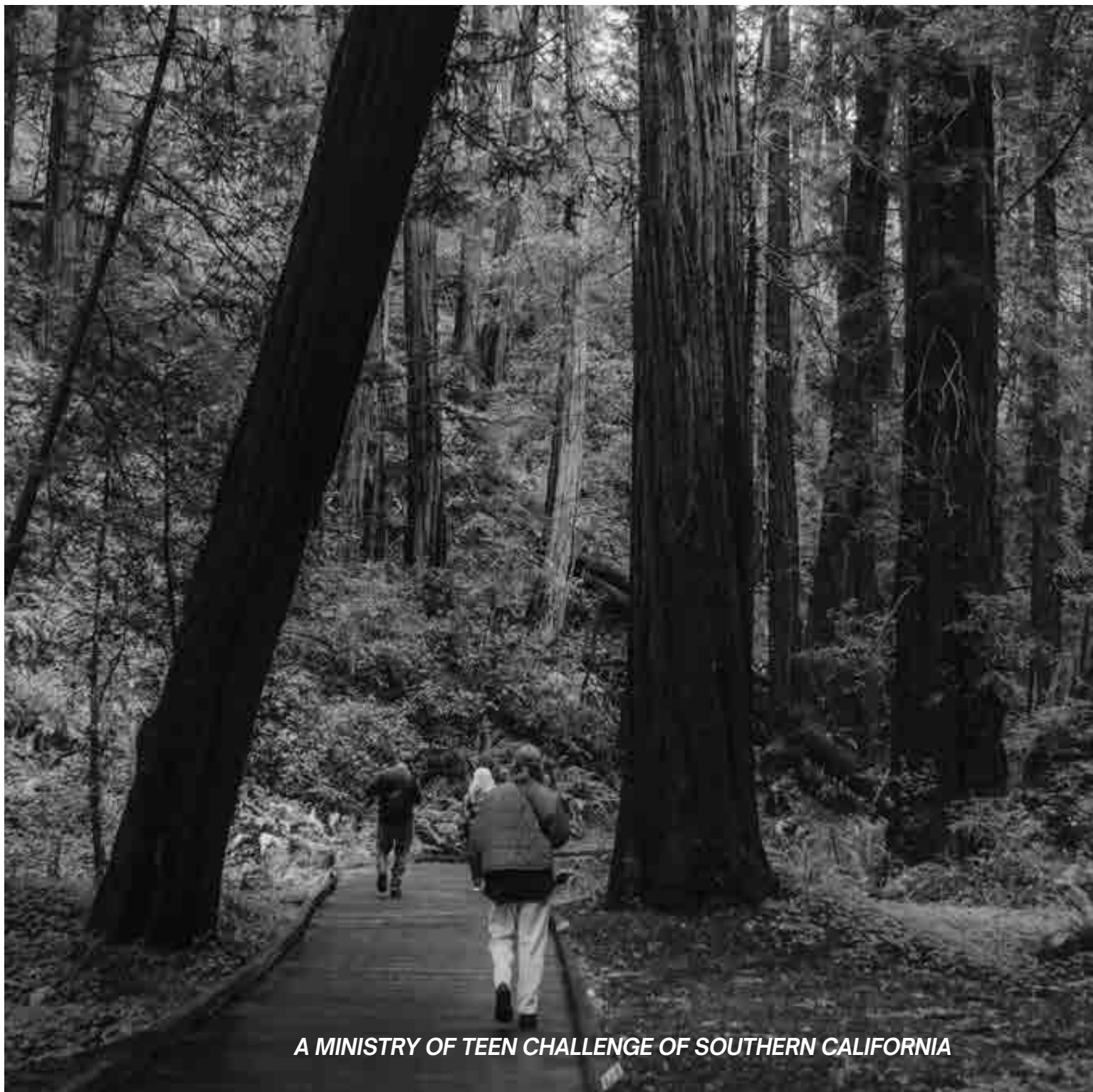
Chapter 9:

MADE FOR MORE:

STEPPING INTO THE NEW LIFE GOD HAS FOR YOU



A NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CURRICULUM SERIES



A MINISTRY OF TEEN CHALLENGE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Chapter 9:

Made for More: Stepping into the New Life God Has for You

*Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.*
—C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*



Have you ever stopped to consider that your struggles with addiction were never part of God's original design for your life? That the chains that have bound you were never meant to be your story? The truth is, you were created for so much more. As Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us, God's plans for you are plans for good, not for harm—plans to give you hope and a future.

As Francesca Block so powerfully said:

Think about the word destroy. Do you know what it is? De-story. Destroy. De-story. You see. And restore. That's re-story. Do you know that only two things have been proven to help survivors of the Holocaust? Massage is one. Telling their story is another. Being touched and touching. Telling your story is touching. It sets you free.

The devil has tried to de-story your life through addiction and brokenness, robbing you of hope and covering your life with shame and pain. But just as Holocaust survivors found healing through sharing their stories, God invites you to step into restoration—re-storying your life through His love, grace, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes, in the depths of addiction and brokenness, it's hard to believe we could be meant for anything else. The weight of shame, failure, and repeated attempts at change can leave us feeling permanently marked by our past. But God sees beyond our current circumstances to who He created us to be. When we bring our stories to Him, He restores what has been destroyed and writes a new story of hope, healing, and purpose.

Seeing Through Heaven's Eyes

When God looks at you, He doesn't see an addict, a failure, or someone beyond hope. He sees His beloved child, uniquely created in His image. Psalm 139:13-14 tells us that you are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Before addiction entered the picture, before the struggles began, God knit you together with purpose and intention.

The journey of transformation begins with accepting this truth: your identity is not found in your struggles but in your Creator. As emphasized in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” This grace empowers us to claim our true identity as God's children without the weight of comparison or shame.

Consider this story about an unexpected midnight encounter:

There was a father whose peaceful sleep was interrupted one night by his four-year-old and two-year-old children, who had decided their beds were no longer suitable compared to Dad's cozy one. Like most of us, when awakened at 2:38 a.m., he wasn't exactly bursting with joy or ready for negotiations about sleeping arrangements. After several failed attempts to convince these determined little ones that their beds were perfectly fine, he surrendered to their presence. They crawled in beside him—close to Dad, safe, protected, sheltered.

The next morning, looking at his sleeping children, he captured a photo that took his breath away. It was more than just a picture; it was a moment of pure love frozen in time. Through this “interruption,” he glimpsed something profound about God's goodness: Sometimes, what we view as unwanted disruptions in our lives are actually windows through which we can see God's heart.

Just as those children found safety and belonging in their father's presence, God invites us to find our true identity and purpose in His embrace. The journey may not be what we expected, but His goodness awaits us at every step—even the unexpected ones.



Think about it: Those children weren't concerned about whether they deserved to be in their father's bed. They didn't worry about their past behavior that day, whether they'd eaten all their vegetables at dinner or if they'd cleaned their room correctly. They knew they needed their father, and they trusted his love enough to come to him, even at an inconvenient hour. This is exactly how our Heavenly Father invites us to approach Him. As Jesus reminds us in Matthew 11:28,

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

What appeared to be an interruption to the father's sleep became a precious moment of connection and love. What we often view as disruptions to our plans can become sacred spaces where we encounter God's heart in unexpected ways. The father in our story didn't require his children to prove themselves worthy of his presence; he opened his arms and made room for them. In the same way, God doesn't wait for us to get everything right before welcoming us. **He meets us in our messy midnight moments, our desperate searches for comfort, and our stumbling attempts to find our way home.**

Just like that father taking a photo the next morning, seeing the beauty in what began as an interruption, God sees the potential for beauty in every broken piece of our lives. He's not just waiting at the end of our journey; He's present in every step, turning our interruptions into invitations, our disruptions into discoveries of His grace.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- How does seeing yourself as fearfully and wonderfully made challenge your current view of yourself?
- When have you experienced an “interruption” that later revealed God's goodness?
- What lies about your identity have you believed because of addiction?



Break in the Journey



A Grace That Leads Us Home

Earlier in our journey together, we discussed how grace enables us to come home to the Father and breaks the power of our past through Christ's blood. But grace isn't just the doorway to salvation—it's the path we walk every day of our recovery journey. As Francis Chan reminds us, "Grace will lead us home."

But what does this grace look like in the midst of addiction? When shame threatens to overwhelm us, when cravings feel unbearable, when past failures loom large—how do we find and hold onto God's grace in these moments? The answer lies in understanding that grace is God's presence actively working in our lives, strengthening and edifying us for what lies ahead.

Every person is uniquely created in God's image, and His grace empowers us to claim our identity as His children without the weight of comparison. We don't have to measure up to others' expectations or even our own standards of worthiness. Knowing that His grace lovingly compels us toward transformation, we can confidently be who we are called to be. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:10,

"By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect."

Grace allows us to embrace the Father more deeply because it removes the barriers we've built through shame and self-condemnation. It releases us from the past not by erasing it but by transforming how we see it—through the lens of God's redemptive love rather than our own failures.

We often think we need to clean ourselves up before coming to God, but grace means God meets us exactly where we are. Consider Mark 9:14-29, where Jesus encounters a father desperate for his son's healing. The disciples had tried and failed to help, much like our own failed attempts at change. The father cries out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" This is how grace meets us in recovery—we don't need perfect faith or complete victory. We need to come as we are, bringing our mix of hope, struggle, and doubt to Jesus. His response to the man is beautifully simple: *"Bring him to me."* Some challenges in life are beyond human ability to fix—brokenness so deep, wounds so profound, that only the hand of God can bring healing and restoration. The situation in the natural required a supernatural response, and only Jesus had the power to heal the boy and set him free.

This is what grace looks like in the midst of addiction—it's not about mustering up enough strength to overcome on our own. It's about bringing our brokenness to Jesus again and again, knowing His grace is sufficient even in our weakest moments. As 2 Corinthians 12:9 says,

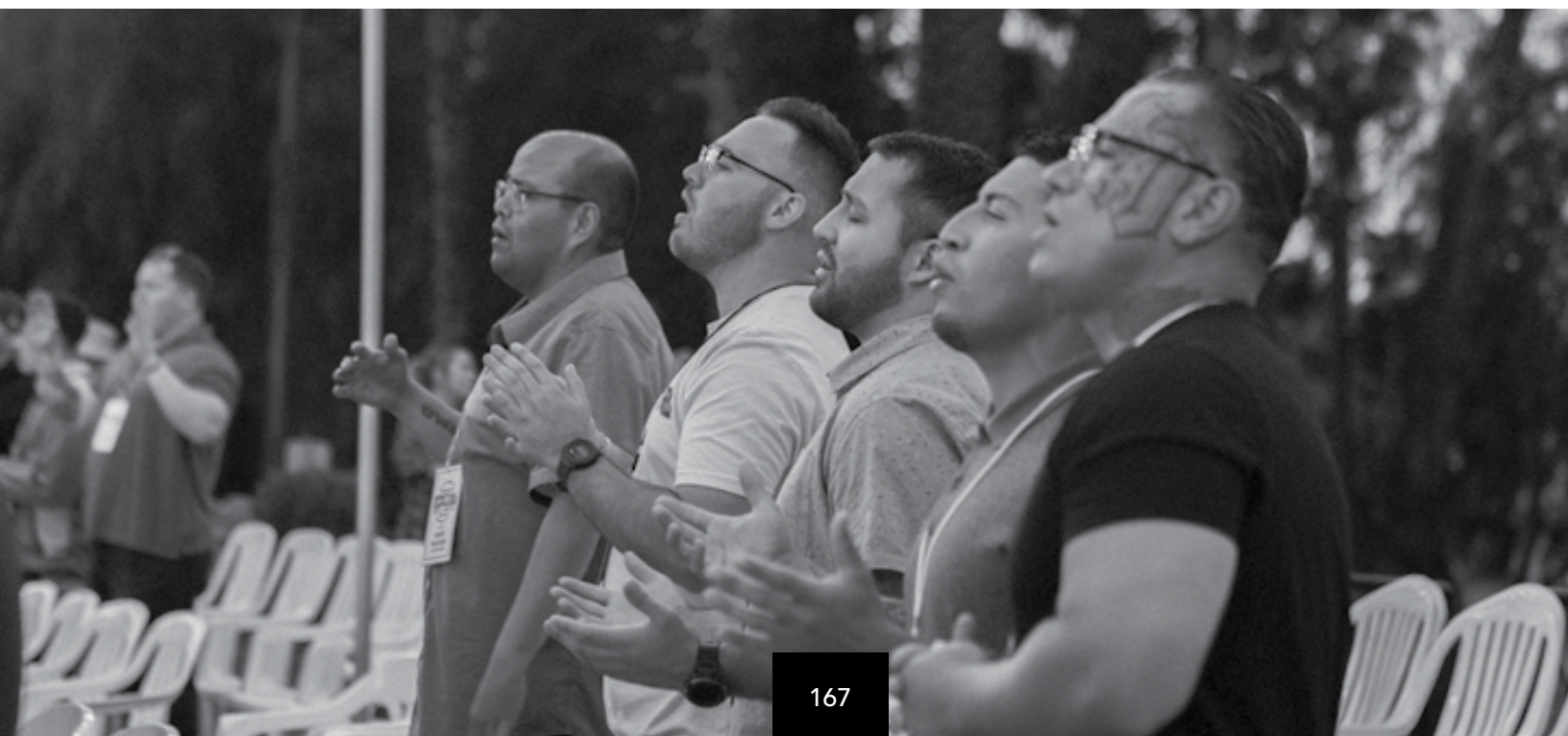
“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Grace works in our lives in several powerful ways:

1. **Grace Initiates** - Even before we recognized our need for help, God was moving toward us with love. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). His grace takes the first step.
2. **Grace Empowers** - We receive strength beyond our own capabilities. This is about God's power working in us, not our own willpower. “And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).
3. **Grace Transforms** - Rather than managing our behavior, grace changes us from the inside out. “He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” (2 Timothy 1:9).
4. **Grace Sustains** - Even when we stumble, His grace carries us through. “Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Brennan Manning writes, “For those who feel their lives are a grave disappointment to God, it requires enormous trust and reckless, raging confidence to accept that the love of Jesus Christ knows no shadow of alteration or change.” This is especially true in recovery, where we often feel we've disappointed God too many times. But grace means His love remains constant, His help remains available, and His transformation continues even when we can't see it.

Grace is about receiving God's unearned favor and letting it work deeply in our lives. **Don't become lost in “doing things” for God at the expense of simply “being” his beloved child.** This is the heart of grace: not that we must first become worthy, but that we can come to Jesus just as we are, and His grace will do the work of transformation in us.



Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- How has your understanding of grace changed through your recovery journey?
- What areas of your life do you still struggle to believe God's grace can transform?
- How can you practically rest in God's grace today instead of striving in your own strength?



Break in the Journey

When God Lets You Die

Sometimes, transformation requires a death before new life can emerge. We can see this in John chapter 11, where we find the story of a family Jesus deeply loved—Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. These weren't strangers to Jesus; they were close friends. Their home in Bethany had been a place of rest and fellowship for Him. Mary was the same woman who would later anoint Jesus' feet with expensive perfume (John 12:3). These people knew Jesus personally and witnessed His power firsthand.

When Lazarus fell ill, his sisters sent word to Jesus with a simple message: "Lord, the one you love is sick" (John 11:3). They didn't explicitly ask Jesus to come—they didn't have to. Their faith in His love for them was such that they believed simply telling Him would be enough. It's the kind of message you send when you're confident in someone's care for you.

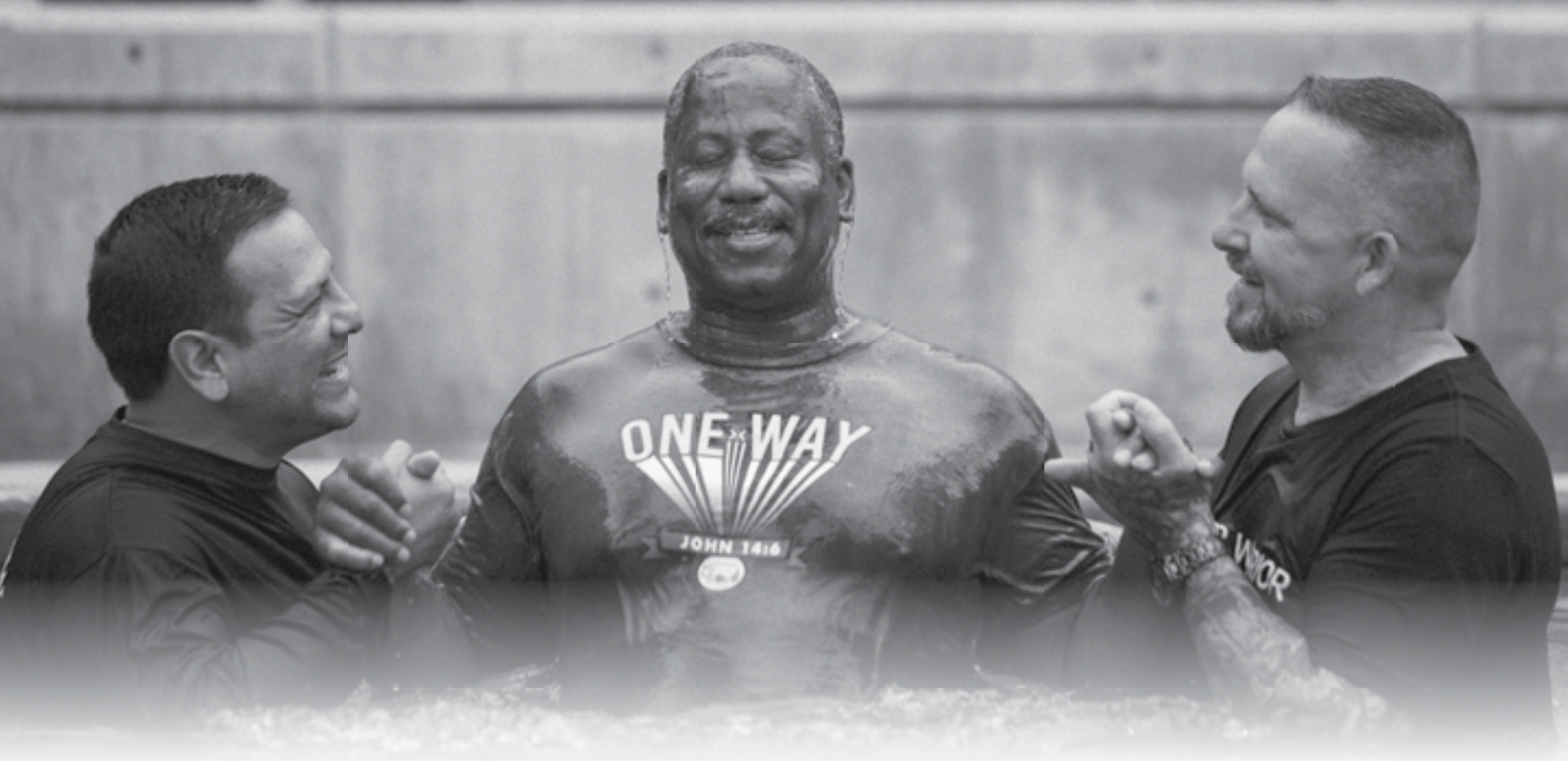
What happens next is striking. Despite His love for this family,

"when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days"
(John 11:6).



Jesus made a deliberate choice to delay. He let Lazarus die.

Imagine being Lazarus in those final hours. You've sent word to Jesus, confident He will come. After all, you've seen Him heal countless others. Perhaps word even returns: "Jesus isn't coming." Questions flood your mind: "He's healed so many people. I've seen it with my own eyes. Why isn't He coming to save me?" As the fever spikes and life slips away, it might seem like the Lord has passed over your affliction.



Or consider the sisters Martha and Mary. They had faith enough to send for Jesus, believing He could help. But instead of their prayers producing immediate relief, they faced further delay. *"I prayed, and nothing happened! In fact, Jesus intentionally didn't show up!"* The silence in their home after Lazarus's last breath must have been deafening. How do you process that the One who could have prevented this chose not to come?

Yet, in this devastating delay, God was working for a greater purpose. As Jesus said in verse 4, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory." Sometimes, a painful crisis arrives in our lives that is destined to bring God glory—not because of the pain itself, but because of the resurrection power that follows.

This is true in recovery as well. There are things in our lives that God allows to "die":

- Old identities rooted in addiction
- Relationships that enable destructive behavior
- Ways of coping that seemed to give life but brought death
- False beliefs about ourselves and God
- Patterns of thinking that keep us bound

We might cry out, *"But Lord, if this is from you, why must it die?"* The answer often lies in this profound truth: For there to be a resurrection, there must first be a death. In the most decisive, crucial, and critical moments of our lives, will we trust His sovereignty and His plan, believing that there will be a resurrection one day?

Jesus was sure of His mission. When He finally arrived, He didn't apologize for the delay. Instead, He made one of His most powerful "I AM" statements: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Then He asked Martha a question that echoes through the centuries to us: "Do you believe this?"

The situation seemed hopeless. The stench of death was undeniable—Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. But Jesus wasn't deterred by the finality of the situation. "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). His specific command, "Lazarus, come out!" demonstrated both His authority over death and His personal care for each of us.

But notice what happens next. Even after the resurrection, Lazarus needed help removing his grave clothes. What a picture of our own transformation! **God brings the resurrection power, but we often need community to help us shed the old grave clothes of addiction and brokenness.**

Sometimes, what looks like God's absence is actually His perfect timing at work. What feels like abandonment might be preparation for a greater demonstration of His power. What appears to be death might be the prelude to resurrection.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- What areas of your life might God be allowing to “die” so He can bring resurrection?
- How do you typically respond when God's timing doesn't match your expectations?
- Who helps you remove your “grave clothes” as you walk in new life?



Break in the Journey

Walking into the Promised Land

The story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt happened thousands of years ago, but today, it still powerfully illustrates God's heart for freedom and restoration.

In Exodus 3:7-8, we find a pivotal moment where God reveals His character to Moses:

“The LORD said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them ... and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.’”

Notice the progression: God sees, God hears, God comes down, and God rescues. This is true for us today. The same God who saw His people's suffering in Egypt sees your struggles with addiction. He hears your cries in the middle of the night. And just as He came down to rescue Israel, He has come down in the person of Jesus Christ to bring freedom to all who are bound.

But God's vision goes beyond the rescue. Did you catch that last part? He doesn't just deliver them from Egypt; He brings them into “a good and spacious land.” **God's plan for your life isn't just freedom from addiction—it's freedom for a purpose.** He wants to bring you into a good land, a place of promise and potential.

In Deuteronomy 1:8, God tells His people, “See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the LORD swore he would give to your fathers.” God has given the land, but they still must take possession of it.

Once we've been delivered, God desires that we step into and fully possess the new life He has for us. But this requires action on our part. This doesn't mean we earn God's promises—they're already given to us—but we must exercise faith to walk in them.

This journey requires courage. God knew His people would deal with fear and discouragement as they faced their enemies, which is why He commanded in verse 21, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Fear and discouragement will absolutely try to keep you from entering into God's purpose for your new life. They'll whisper that you can't really change, that you'll never break free, that you don't deserve a better life.

But here's a necessary caution: As we step into this new life, we must be careful to stay within God's boundaries. If He said, “Go in and possess this land,” but didn't say “that land,” we must respect those limits. There are places and areas in our lives that God has not given us permission to enter. This might mean:

- Relationships He hasn't approved
- Opportunities that look good but aren't His plan
- Old environments that could trigger relapse
- Activities that might compromise our recovery

Just as Israel had specific boundaries for their promised land, we must stay within the boundaries of God's Word and His specific guidance for our lives. True freedom isn't about doing whatever we want but living within the good boundaries God has set for us.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions:



- What “promised land” do you sense God calling you to possess?
- What fears or discouragements try to keep you from moving forward?
- How can you practically exercise courage in your recovery journey today?



On the Road With Jesus

Have you ever felt like you were walking alone on your recovery journey? Like Jesus seemed distant or uninvolved in your daily struggles? The story of the Emmaus Road in Luke 24:13-35 shows us how Jesus walks with us, even when we don't recognize His presence.

Picture the scene: Two disciples are walking home from Jerusalem, their hearts heavy with grief and confusion. Jesus' crucifixion had crushed their hopes, and even reports of His resurrection left them uncertain. As they walked and talked, trying to make sense of everything, a stranger joined them on the road. This "stranger" was Jesus Himself, though they were kept from recognizing Him.

The disciples found themselves sharing their deepest hurts and confusion with this "stranger." He doesn't interrupt or dismiss their pain; He listens, then gently begins to help them see their story within God's bigger story.

Jesus is always walking with us, always talking to us—we just need to learn to recognize His presence. Like these disciples, we often miss Him in the ordinary moments of life. Whether we're driving to work, standing in line at the grocery store, sitting in a recovery meeting, or facing a moment of temptation, He is there. As J.I. Packer reminds us,

There is no moment when His eye is off me, or His attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when His care falters.

It may seem strange that their eyes were still closed to His identity even as Jesus walked with them, teaching them. It wasn't until He broke bread with them that *"their eyes were opened and they recognized him"* (Luke 24:31). It's often in the breaking—whether of bread or of ourselves—that we truly see Jesus. As Mike Conway reflects, *"When you surrender something to God, that releases God to do whatever He would will, and yet that releases me also."*

Looking back on their encounter, the disciples recalled, *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road?"* (Luke 24:32). These burning moments—when something stirs in our hearts—are often Jesus trying to get our attention. Maybe it's an unexpected sense of peace in a difficult situation, a scripture that suddenly speaks directly to your circumstance or a "coincidental" encounter that proves providential.

Don't ignore these stirrings. They might be the beginning of a miracle in your life. These disciples' darkness turned to light, their confusion to clarity, their grief to joy—all because they were willing to walk and talk with Jesus, even when they didn't recognize Him at first.

Many of us wish we could bypass the long road of recovery. If only we could snap our fingers and no longer have that craving or temptation. How much easier that would be! But we often forget that transformation happens while we're on that road, walking and talking with Jesus through every heartache, disappointment, celebration, and victory.



Jesus isn't waiting for you to cross the finish line to welcome you home. He doesn't want the perfect "you" — the "you" who pretends like you've got it together—the "you" who doesn't struggle and can't quit and can't do anything right.

He just wants you. Right now, right where you are, right as you are.

Even in moments when we feel most alone, He is there, guiding us toward healing and hope. As Brennan Manning beautifully puts it, *"My deepest awareness of myself is that I am deeply loved by Jesus Christ and I have done nothing to earn it or deserve it."* This is the heart of walking with Jesus: Not that we must be perfect, but that we are already perfectly loved.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- The disciples on the Emmaus road didn't recognize Jesus walking with them. Where in your daily life might Jesus be walking with you in ways you don't always notice?
- The disciples opened up about their grief and confusion, and Jesus listened before speaking. How does it change your view of prayer to know Jesus wants to hear your raw honesty before He gives direction?
- Their eyes were opened when Jesus broke bread with them. How have you seen Jesus most clearly in your own "breaking moments"—times of loss, surrender, or humility?
- The disciples said, "Were not our hearts burning within us?" when Jesus spoke. Have you ever experienced a stirring in your heart that you later realized was God trying to get your attention? What was that like?
- Recovery, like discipleship, happens on the road—not instantly. What has God been teaching you along your journey that you might not have learned if He had just taken away your struggle instantly?
- Jesus doesn't wait for us to "get it all together"—He meets us as we are. What part of your life feels most unworthy right now, and how can you invite Jesus to meet you in that place?
- Brennan Manning wrote, "My deepest awareness of myself is that I am deeply loved by Jesus Christ and I have done nothing to earn it." How does knowing you are already loved—without having to earn it—change the way you see yourself?
- The disciples' grief turned to joy when they realized Jesus was with them. Where do you need Jesus to turn confusion into clarity or grief into joy in your life today?



Your Story Continues

As we close this chapter and this journey we've been on for the past few months, remember that God isn't finished writing your story. Every new day represents a fresh page and an opportunity for His grace to write something beautiful through your life. The struggles you've faced, the pain you've endured, even the failures you've experienced—God can use all of it. Not because the pain itself was good but because He specializes in bringing beauty from ashes.

Think back over the truths we've explored:

- You were created for more than addiction
- God's grace meets you in your struggles
- Death always comes before the resurrection
- God will grant you the courage you need to enter the Promised Land
- Jesus walks with you every step of the way

These are promises you can build your life upon. When the challenges come—and they will—remember that you're not walking this road alone. The same God who saw Israel's suffering and came down to rescue them sees you. The same Jesus who walked with discouraged disciples on the Emmaus Road walks with you. The same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives in you, empowering you for every step of the journey.

Your story isn't over. In fact, in many ways, it's just beginning. As you continue your journey, may you be encouraged by this ancient blessing that God instructed Aaron to speak over His people. Let these words sink deep into your heart:

*The LORD bless you
and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.
(Numbers 6:24-26)*

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions



- What new chapter do you sense God wanting to write in your story??
- Think back to when you first started this program. What changes do you see in yourself—in your thinking, your relationships, your faith?
- How has your understanding of God's love and grace deepened since you began?
- What are some steps you plan to take to stay connected to God and your community?



Verses to Reflect on This Week

- "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)
- "The LORD said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them.'" Exodus 3:7-8 (NIV)
- "See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the LORD swore he would give to your fathers." Deuteronomy 1:8 (NIV)
- "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deuteronomy 1:21 (NIV)
- "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)
- "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20 (NIV)
- "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm 139:13-14 (NIV)
- "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect." 1 Corinthians 15:10 (NIV)
- "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 (NIV)
- "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Luke 24:32 (NIV)
- "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." Numbers 6:24-26 (NIV)
- "Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:12-13 (NIV)

Notes

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

1 CORINTHIANS 15:22



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