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TRAUMA & PTSD SERIES • FREE GUIDE

When the Wound Won't Close

Peter, the Charcoal Fire, and the God Who Heals

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A Note Before You Begin

If you are reading this, something happened. You may not call it trauma. You may call it the night, the loss, the diagnosis, the words you wish you had never heard. Whatever language you use, your mind keeps returning to it. Your body still reacts. Some part of you has not come home yet.

This guide is built around a single Bible story — Peter's denial of Jesus and the morning Jesus walked him back to the place of the wound to heal it. If you have ever felt disqualified by a moment you cannot undo, this is for you. I lost my wife Wendy of thirty-three years to pancreatic cancer in April 2024. I know what it is to have your body register a danger your mind already understands. So this is not theory. It is what I have learned walking this road with Scripture in hand.

He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.
Psalm 147:3 (NLT)

PART 1 • THE NIGHT PETER FELL

A Confident Promise Before the Fall

Peter did not expect to fail. Hours before Jesus was arrested, he spoke with bold certainty. He would die before he denied his Lord. He believed himself. Trauma often begins not with rebellion, but with the collapse of sincere intention. The shock comes when our self-image and our actions no longer line up.

After the arrest, Peter followed at a distance and sat near a charcoal fire in the high priest's courtyard. The setting was ordinary. The moment was not. A servant girl looked at him in the firelight and said he had been with Jesus. Peter denied it. Two more accusations followed. Each time, fear tightened its grip. He was not thinking about theology or calling. He was reacting to danger. Trauma often forms in those moments — when instinct overrides conviction and the nervous system takes over.

After the third denial, Luke records one of the most emotionally loaded moments in the Gospels. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Peter remembered the prediction, went outside, and wept bitterly. Something inside him broke. The man who had walked on water, who had confessed Christ as the Son of God, was now collapsed under the weight of what he had done. Failure had become a wound.

> ***The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter… And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly.***
> Luke 22:61–62 (NLT)

PART 2 • THE DRIFT BACK

After the resurrection, Peter said, "I'm going fishing." That sentence carries more weight than it seems. Jesus had already called Peter beyond fishing. He was meant to be a fisher of people. But after a crushing failure, Peter went back to what he knew before Jesus reshaped his life.

That is one of the oldest patterns of unhealed trauma. It pulls you back into an older version of yourself. It whispers that the new calling no longer fits. The familiar feels safer than the uncertain — even when the familiar no longer serves you. And like Peter, when one wounded leader drifts, others tend to follow. Unresolved failure rarely stays private. It pulls people with it.

> **PAUSE**
> Where have you been drifting back to an older version of yourself? Not because the old life is better — but because the wound made the new calling feel unfit?

PART 3 • THE CHARCOAL FIRE AGAIN

John 21 records a detail that changes everything. When the disciples come ashore, Jesus has already prepared a charcoal fire. Only one other charcoal fire is mentioned in the New Testament — the one in the courtyard where Peter denied Him. Jesus deliberately brought Peter back to the sensory setting of his wound, not to reopen it, but to heal it.

Three times Jesus asked, "Do you love me?" Three questions to mirror three denials. Each time, Jesus responded with a commission. Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep. This was not punishment. This was restoration. Trauma healing often requires revisiting the painful memory in the presence of safety, grace, and truth.

Jesus did not lower Peter's calling. He reaffirmed it. Failure did not disqualify Peter from future faithfulness. Trauma did not end his usefulness. The man who wept in shame became the man who boldly proclaimed Christ at Pentecost. Jesus does not define us by our worst moment. He restores us and sends us forward.

> **TRUTH**
> Jesus is not afraid to walk you back to the charcoal fire. He goes there to heal, not to humiliate. Your wound is not the end of your story. It is the place He intends to meet you.

PART 4 • THE PATH FORWARD

Trauma can divide life into two parts — before and after. Yet trauma is not the end of your story. It is a chapter. Pain may shape you, but it does not get to define you. God does not abandon wounded hearts. He moves toward them. Healing rarely happens in one dramatic moment. More often, it unfolds in steady steps along a path that includes four things:

> **Honesty**
> Lament. Tell God exactly what hurts. The Psalms do this on every page.

Grounding
Slow down. Breathe. Remind yourself this moment is not the past moment.

Community
Refuse isolation. Let safe people back in — pastors, friends, counselors.

Renewal
Anchor on Scripture. Let truth interrupt the loop the wound keeps replaying.

It is also worth saying clearly: sometimes trauma requires professional help. Counseling, therapy, and medical care are not signs of weak faith. God often works through trained professionals just as He works through Scripture and prayer. Seeking help is wisdom, not compromise.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.
Psalm 34:18 (NLT)

YOUR NEXT STEP

If this guide helped, there is more waiting for you. The Disciple Blueprint Trauma Bundle goes much deeper — a full teaching guide on why trauma sticks to the mind and body, a 21-day prayer journey, printable Scripture anchor cards, and an extended journal workbook. It is the resource I wish I had when I needed it most.

GO DEEPER • THE TRAUMA BUNDLE
Available now at discipleblueprint.com — the full teaching guide, 21-day prayer journey, Scripture anchor cards, and journal workbook in one resource.

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