

## How Do I Reconnect With God?

**1 Peter 1:13:** *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*



Many Christians have had the disheartening experience of feeling like they have lost their connection with God. There you were, going along through life's experiences and something happens. Whether it is one big change or many little things over time, you wake up one day and realize that God seems far away. Now what? Is it over? How do you find your way back to that precious connection that you lost? A good way to understand what to do to find your way back is to observe some of the experiences of the Apostle Peter. We all know how he denied Jesus on the day of his crucifixion. What we don't often think about is how he got to that point and what it took to draw him back into God's favor.

Peter was drawn to follow Jesus three different times. On that third occasion, Jesus had been preaching to a crowd from Peter's boat. After preaching, he instructed Peter to cast the nets and try once more for a catch. Though skeptical, Peter and his companions did cast their nets, and the catch was so great it almost sunk the boat!

**Peter knew Jesus was drawing him. Let's drop into the middle of the account:**

**Luke 5:8-11:** *8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!*

This showed Peter's awareness of his own imperfections and his reverence for Jesus.

*9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men. 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*

Think of all the miracles Peter witnessed Jesus performing, and perhaps this miracle with the fish is the one that had the greatest impact on him. Not only was it a demonstration of Jesus' power, but it was the turning point in Peter's life. It was at this point that he made a full commitment to follow Jesus.

This miracle was specifically directed at Peter. Peter did follow Jesus, though he had not yet learned how much he would have to change. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, Peter was a leader of sorts, bold and impetuous. He knew Jesus would change the world, but he had no idea how he would do it or what would be required of him.



**When we follow Jesus, do we really know what's coming? Do we have preconceived ideas about what discipleship will look like? Do we expect it to be a life without problems of any kind? Like maybe special, protective "cross-shaped" bubble wrap?**

When we decide to dedicate ourselves to Jesus, we think, *This is good! It is full of grace and God's love—what could be better than that?* However, there's more to it.

**Just before going to Gethsemane, remember what Peter said to Jesus about standing by his side?**

**Matthew 26:31–35:** *31 Then Jesus said to them, You will all fall away because of me this night... 32 But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee. 33 But Peter said to him, Even though all may fall away because of you, I will never fall away. 34 Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times. 35 Peter said to him, Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you. All the disciples said the same thing too.*

(Source: Bible Commentary by William Barclay) *After I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee—We see the confidence of Jesus. Always Jesus saw beyond the cross. He was every bit as certain of the glory as he was of the suffering. ...Further, this shows us something about Peter. Surely his fault is clear; over confidence in himself. He knew that he loved Jesus—that was never in doubt—and he thought that all by himself he could face any situation which might arise. We shall be safe only when we replace the confidence which boasts by the humility which knows its weakness and which depends not on itself but the help of Christ.*



**As Jesus' disciples, do we ever hold onto a pride-driven self-confidence that sets us up for failure? Peter faced this, Judas faced this, and of course, Lucifer, later known as Satan, is the ultimate example of destructive pride.**

Peter's reaction is genuine. He really believes he will stand by Jesus because of who Jesus is and what Jesus means to him. He does not understand the magnitude of the situation. He will have to learn that, and he will. But it will be a devastating lesson, which will lead to incredibly powerful growth on Peter's part.

But let's talk about the devastation first because that was how Peter started the experience.

**Peter did deny Jesus three times. These denials were spoken during the heat of the persecution of Jesus by the Jews before he was later turned over to Pilate:**

**Matthew 26:69–70:** *69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him and said, You too were with Jesus the Galilean. 70 But he denied it before them all, saying, I do not know what you are talking about.*

Peter was in the courtyard of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled after Jesus was arrested.



**It started with a simple lie—I do not know what you are talking about.**

**In the heat of a moment, do we ever deny the truth that we know? Maybe we lie to ourselves, saying, Well, what I'm doing isn't THAT bad. It's still better than what so-and-so is doing. God accepts me as I am. By planting ourselves in a state of mediocrity, we never spiritually mature.**



Some practical lessons from the first denial:

- Fear can overpower our conviction.
- Small compromises lead to bigger failures. Peter's small lie here would set the stage for the more shocking and emphatic denials that would come next.

Peter is probably not expecting anyone to recognize him. It is early in the morning; he is quietly sitting there. All of a sudden, this servant girl springs this statement on him. His gut reaction is usually, "I will stand by you, Lord!" and he steps up to the situation. But here he steps back into a lie.

**Peter had begun walking down a path of spiritual damage. He would continue with his second denial:**

**Matthew 26:71-72:** *71 When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. 72 And again he denied it with an oath, I do not know the man.*

*He denied it with an oath—now the lie has a promise attached to it, stating unequivocally, I do not know the man!*



When the servant girl pointed him out as having been with Jesus, Peter jumped on this with great passion, denying what was true.

**The second denial was stronger than the first. Again, small compromises can lead to bigger failures. Do we ever “double-down” on our own way of seeing things? Do we protect and defend what is fleshly over spiritual?**

It's easy to look at Peter and blame him for what he did, but the whole point is, *What about me? Do I ever do something similar?* In Peter's defense, the sudden turn of events—the betrayal, arrest and trial—left him disoriented. His expectations of Jesus as the Messiah did not align with what was happening.

Some practical lessons from the second denial:



- Fear can escalate quickly into desperation and even panic. We make bad decisions when we panic. Peter felt cornered.
- Peter was confronted multiple times by different people and now in front of others. The repeated questioning increased his feelings of anxiety and pressure.
- Self-preservation overpowered his commitment to truth. If he hadn't denied Jesus, he could have been arrested, interrogated or even executed alongside of Jesus.

A lot was going on in his head during these few seconds.

However, Jesus flat-out told Peter, *you will deny me three times*. Peter answered, *NEVER!* And so did the rest of the disciples. But now they are in the heat of battle, and it is overwhelming.

That first mistake is bad enough. The second mistake is done with intent—so we are seeing the situation blossom into something horrible, and it doesn't end there.

### **Peter walked headlong into the depths of self-destructive despair with his third denial:**

**Matthew 26:73–75:** *73 A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away. 74 Then he began to curse and swear, I do not know the man! And immediately a rooster crowed. 75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.*

Not only was Peter exposed to his own weakness, but his weakness was also exposed to everybody around him. The lie and the promise were now sealed with cursing and swearing. In his fear and insecurity, Peter, the one who usually stepped up to take responsibility, had just walked away from his suffering Lord. He had just given up his small opportunity to be an encouragement.



Some practical lessons from the third denial:

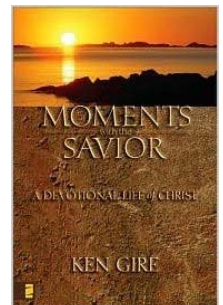
- Fear can push us to extreme actions we never imagined.
- The rooster crowing fulfilled the prophecy from **Matthew 26:34**. God's and Jesus' words are always true—even if we don't believe them.



**In our insecurity and suffering, do we ever walk away from our Lord Jesus, and thereby cut our connection with God as well?**

**Luke 22:61** tells us Jesus looked straight at Peter when this happened. What must that have felt like?

*Moments with the Savior* by Ken Gire: Be hard on him if you like. Talk about how self-confident he was. Talk about how impulsive he was. Talk about how he was always shooting off his mouth. And how he needed a good sifting. Go ahead. But before you do, remember that the other disciples had already deserted Jesus. Peter and John alone followed him that terrifying night. True, Peter followed him at a distance. But still he followed...And it's true, he failed Jesus. But he failed in a courtyard where the others dared not set foot. And he failed not under normal pressure, but under the heavy winnow of Satan.



**This self-imposed separation from God and our Lord Jesus is a devastating condition to be in. Though devastating, it does not have to be permanent!**

**Psalm 34:18:** *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

We remember that this was before Pentecost, before Peter received the holy spirit. He was still a new, immature Christian at this point, being tested in extreme circumstances to the point of remorse and then repentance. His denial was driven by fear and weakness rather than by the dishonesty and greed we see in Judas.

With Jesus' compassion and guidance, Peter's failure didn't stop him from reconnecting with God through Jesus. But that reconnection process was not an easy snap of the fingers. He had to find his way back.

*He went out and wept bitterly*—Peter's heart is torn to pieces by what he has done.

The Apostle Peter's experiences are given to us to help us through our own life experiences. Perhaps we find we have had a denial experience. Perhaps we find ourselves weeping bitterly at our distance from where we once were. Maybe we are feeling overwhelming despair.



As with the Apostle Peter, any alienation we may experience from God and Jesus always has some roots in our own hearts, minds and actions. Knowing this is the first step in accepting the fact that God is always ready for us to return to Him if we are truly repentant and desirous of again seeking His will through Christ.

We need to look at ourselves and realize we are a mess. But in that mess, God is always willing and ready for us to come back—we just have to find a way to meet His willingness and readiness.

It's actually comforting to know that one as strong in faith as the Apostle Peter had such hard experiences as he was learning how to follow Christ.



## What did Peter need to do in order to bring himself back to a space where he could accept God's love and Jesus' forgiveness?

This is an important question. We of course know that Peter DID overcome his sinful and earthly reactions and character to become a foundation pillar of the true church. To uncover the principles of his growth, we will look at something Peter wrote in his first epistle many years later. His words show us a simple pathway back when we ourselves falter.

**We assume Peter's own experience was behind part of writing these particular scriptures long after the denial trial:**

**1 Peter 1:13-16:** *13 Therefore, (because you've been called to such a high and privileged calling) prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.*

After Pentecost, Peter was bold in his preaching, teaching with clarity and a deep understanding of God's plan. He took a central role in the leadership of the early church. He was still impulsive (**Galatians 2:11-14**), but his love for Jesus was now refined and strengthened by having the holy spirit. Having the holy spirit doesn't erase our personality traits; it redirects them for God's purposes. This is what happened to Peter.

### FIRST REPAIRING AND RESTORING POINT: PREPARE YOUR MIND FOR ACTION!



(NOTE THIS FIRST POINT IS NOT "TAKE ACTION." IT IS "PREPARE YOUR MIND FOR ACTION." WHY? BECAUSE WE HAVE WANDERED AWAY AND IN ORDER TO GO BACK, WE HAVE TO SET OUR MINDS IN THAT DIRECTION.)

THINK ABOUT HOW BROKEN IN HEART AND MIND PETER MUST HAVE BEEN THE DAY OF AND THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED JESUS' CRUCIFIXION. ALL HOPE SEEMED TO BE LOST, AND HE LIKELY BLAMED HIMSELF IN MANY WAYS.

Not only did he deny even knowing Jesus three times, but maybe he was beating himself up over not paying more attention to Judas. If only he could have stopped the series of events leading up to Jesus' death, maybe his friend and teacher would still be here. Self-blame can be devastating and paralyzing.



**What if...**  
**Would've**  
**Could've**  
**Should've**

What if he hadn't denied Jesus? What would have happened if he would have stood up to the servant girl, and then at each escalating level declared that he had known and loved Jesus? Would it have helped? Would it have saved his friend from death? Peter is drowning in all these doubts at this point.

**However, on the morning of the resurrection, the angel appeared to the women at the tomb, the message was very different than Peter would have thought:**

**Mark 16:6–7:** *6 And he said to them, Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; he is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.*

Tell his disciples **AND** Peter—this tells us a few things. First, Peter wasn't with the other disciples. He must have been so devastated at his denying the Master that he isolated himself. Second, Jesus didn't want Peter to be so overcome with discouragement that he would give up. How beautiful! Failure wouldn't disqualify Peter from reconnecting.

But Peter did not know that yet. The angel knew and gave the message, but the message had to get to Peter.

**Mary Magdelene immediately went to find Peter. Here is where we will find Peter ready for action!**

**John 20:2–3, 6–8:** *2 So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved (we believe this refers to John who always humbly refers to himself in this way), and said to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him. 3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. (John outran Peter and arrived first and waited for Peter.) 6 And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings... 7 and the face-cloth... rolled up in a place by itself. 8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.*

Peter immediately sprang into action. He **NEEDED** to see what was happening. This was an important first step for him because even though he saw, he did not yet believe as John did. Nevertheless, Peter's heart was revealed.

Peter was told something but has to go see for himself. He is older than John, and John outruns Peter. John gets to the tomb and looks in but waits to enter. Simon Peter arrives and goes right in. This is the Peter we know and love—he goes right in and observes *the face-cloth... rolled up in a place by itself, the linen wrappings* and no Jesus.

This was an important first step for him because he took action. He saw but he didn't yet believe. John observed the same scene and *saw and believed*. Peter still had doubt.

We might think he is falling back into his old pattern, but give it time. This was the first action. He is preparing his mind. He is preparing himself to be able to receive, but he has to go through the steps.

Peter's heart was revealed when he ran to the tomb. He wasn't quite ready yet, but he took that first action towards reconciliation.



**What about us? When alienated from God, do we still believe that He is faithful even if we have not been faithful? Do we recall how many times God took Israel back after they would stray away from His Law and His way? Do we still hold the Scriptures and their promises as sacred?**

**Do we cling to even the smallest assurance as we review the promises given to us?**

**Isaiah 42:3:** *A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.*

**Psalms 147:3:** *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.*

We often talk on Christian Questions about taking small steps. How do we move forward when we are down and feel far away from God?



We must prepare our minds for action. This is the first small step. We might not be able to do anything, but we can certainly look into our hearts and minds to assess our situation. *I'm in despair, I'm discouraged about whatever has gone wrong. It is a tragedy, a trauma. I have to get my mind around doing and finding how to cope with this.*

This is the preparation and the first small step. It is a mental decision to move forward based on faith. God is waiting. He is there. We need to prepare our minds to be in line with where He is.

**Faith REQUIRES action. Get up and do something:**

**James 2:18–22:** *18 But someone may well say, You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;*

We may not be in the position of readiness for the works, but when we prepare our minds for action, we are opening the door to be able to take that action. We have to do it inside of our heart and mind first.

Even though Peter sees but doesn't yet believe, it is good, because he started on the road he needed to go down to find his faith and strength in the Lord.



## Repairing and Restoring our Severed Spiritual Connections:



For Peter, running to the tomb was the beginning of his reclaiming an active and vibrant faith. This action did not solve the problem; instead, it opened the door for the problem to be solved.



*What action am I taking that will help me realign myself with the faithfulness of God? Even if I don't have faith in myself, I can have faith in God!*

God had faith in Peter, which is why the angels at the tomb mentioned him by name. Peter didn't see it or understand it yet, but God knew. Peter just needed to be drawn to God's faith in him.

We can be encouraged by the fact that Peter worked on his issues, but they weren't solved after taking just one step. Peter had to stick with it!

**The importance of taking action, no matter how small it may be, cannot be overstated. After this initial action, what comes next?**

Action is movement. The point is to move ourselves again towards God through Jesus again after a period when we were hiding from Him. Once we engage in moving towards God, He will make Himself known to us. With Peter, this occurred in the appearances of God's resurrected son Jesus. We will remain focused on that first day of Jesus' resurrection.

**Let's go back to our theme text. This text has the three steps Peter wrote about much later when he was mature in Christ:**

**1 Peter 1:13:** *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*



**SECOND REPAIRING AND RESTORING POINT: BE SERIOUS AND REVERENT AS YOU BEGIN TO REFOCUS YOUR ATTENTION ON GOD'S GRACE THROUGH JESUS IN YOUR LIFE. LOOK FOR GOD'S LEADING AND INSTRUCTION.**

One important reminder for us is that God allows trials to reveal our need for him. Just as Peter experienced failure, our struggles can help prepare us to recognize God's presence and guidance.

Our friend Howie from New Zealand was just telling us the story of a friend of his who had a traumatic experience as a child that was still affecting her. Howie asked her to write down just one or two positive things that came out of that awful experience that wouldn't have happened otherwise. She gave it a lot of prayerful thought and came back with a full list including things like she feels she is a better mother to her son, and she is more compassionate to those who have suffered. Reframing the experience is helping her.

Peter needed to reframe the bitter disappointment and failure and see it as a stepping stone. Howie's friend went through this in a spiritual sense and found all those positive things. That is the reason for our trials. It is important for us to take the step of reframing. This helps us to reconnect.

On that first day of Jesus' resurrection, Peter was present for two appearances of Jesus. The possibility that he was one of the two on the road to Emmaus would have given him a very strong exposure to the new reality that the crucifixion had brought.

To clarify that—**Luke 24:13-35** tells of the resurrected Jesus appearing to two disciples traveling to Emmaus after Jesus died. One is identified as Cleopas, but the other is not named. We know according to **Luke 24:34** that Jesus also appeared specifically to Peter around this same time, so it's possible Peter was this second man. [See Bonus Material for more.](#)

Whether present or not, he was now in a better position to absorb the grace of God through the actual presence of the risen Lord Jesus.

### **Let's recall how Jesus did this by teaching them on the road to Emmaus:**

**Luke 24:27-33:** *27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures. 28 And they approached the village where they were going,... 29 So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he had reclined at the table with them, he took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, he began giving it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was explaining the Scriptures to us? 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem...*

Peter was so broken after the denials that it makes sense Jesus, in his compassion, would have dramatically appeared to him. Peter had shared many meals with Jesus; he would have been able to recognize the subtle way in which Jesus broke bread. And *our hearts burning within us* does sound like Peter's zeal.

The power of the gospel truth to reset our troubled minds is immeasurable! For Peter, either hearing these teachings in person or hearing about them would have strongly built on the foundation of his action of running to the empty tomb. He took action, still didn't believe, but was now faced with real life confirming the reality!

Jesus'  
post-resurrection  
appearance  
to the apostles  
Luke 24:39-49

Peter got up and ran to the tomb, which was something positive. He was in a place where, when we are broken, nothing positive wants to enter our minds. But his instincts and his love for the Lord overwhelmed him, and he was incredibly blessed.

**Then seeing Jesus suddenly appear inside the locked room where the apostles were meeting would further confirm the reality:**

**Luke 24:36:** *While they were telling these things, he himself stood in their midst and said to them, Peace be to you.*

Here's something interesting—there are “bookends” to this experience.

Jesus said:

*My peace I give unto you*  
on the night of his betrayal  
at the Last Supper  
(John 14:27)

*Peace be unto you*  
were his words when he first met  
the disciples together after his  
resurrection (Luke 24:36)

Jesus essentially said before his crucifixion, *I am giving you my peace*. Then he comes back to them and says, *I am here with that peace*. This shows the comprehensiveness of the power that God gave him through all this turmoil.

Peter had acted (he ran to the tomb) even though he was full of doubt. His actions were met with direct responses from the risen Lord Jesus—*Peace be unto you*. The truth had been revealed despite his own broken life! Maybe the truth was revealed to him because he was so broken and devastated. These evidences of Jesus' resurrection would have been so much more meaningful to Peter after his experience. The lesson could really take root. We know what the Apostle Peter would later become. This is a beautiful unfolding of the small steps necessary to reconnect after we have lost our way.



**Have the actions we've taken to help reestablish our faith, awakened our ability to see the goodness and grace of what we have been called to despite our doubts?**

Like with Howie's friend, this might mean purposefully reframing our experience. Or, like with Peter, it is taking that next small right step towards hope and light. Other actions may include prayer, reading scripture or devotionals and fellowshiping with other Christians. There are many positive, intentional steps we can take to start inching our way back to God. We are inching; we are not cured. This is not a miracle. These are small steps of trying to recover that precious relationship with God and Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 4:7:** *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;*

Just like Peter, we are given clarity to combat both our intellectual and emotional doubts. The reality is, our failures and inconsistencies can be used for the purpose of honoring God!

We have those experiences so that God can be honored through them. He calls those of us with difficulties and challenges so His honor can shine through us. That is why we are focusing on Peter. He is a dramatic example of losing his way and being shown how to find the way back. Notice he did not figure out how to find his way back on his own. He was responding to what he was being shown.

**2 Corinthians 4:8–9:** *8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed <639>, but not despairing <1820>; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;*

**Perplex:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #639 *aporeo*; to have no way out, i.e. be at a loss (mentally)

**Despair:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1820 *exaporeomai*; to be utterly at a loss, i.e. despond:—(in) despair

Yes, life is hard, and things can happen. *Perplexed but not despairing. Persecuted... struck down, but not destroyed.* If we lose our way, we can be assured the way back will be made evident once we prepare our minds for action—once we become serious and reverent and look for what's being put before us.

Although our doubts and self-imposed isolation can push us off track, reverently focusing on our Lord Jesus can keep us from utter despair. Why?

**2 Corinthians 4:10–11:** *10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

 Jonathan

This scripture really hits home. Yesterday at our Bible study, I was talking to our friend Carmela. (*Photo: daughter Sandy and Carmela*) Sister Carm is turning 102 today, and she told me that this scriptural concept has been a focus for her. Her body is failing, but her spirit is strong. To keep herself connected to God, she has a laser-like focus on our Savior, Jesus, the son of God, and his sacrifice. She told me that what we go through is nothing in comparison to his life experience.



Sister Carm has been one of those rock-solid, focused individuals that always puts the Lord first. These verses point out that the brokenness of our lives can bring glory to God—Peter needed to learn this lesson, as do we.

**To sum up what we read earlier in 2 Corinthians 4:7-11, let's look at this from the J.B. Phillips New Testament translation:**


*This priceless treasure we hold, so to speak, in a common earthenware jar—to show that the splendid power of it belongs to God and not to us. We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out! Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. Yes, we who are living are always being exposed to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be plainly seen in our mortal lives.*

That's our Sister Carm!

These verses bring out that there is no room for our earthly life and spiritual life to coexist nicely together. We have to replace the earthly with the spiritual because that is where we are going, and that is what we are called to do.



Peter's initial actions of running to the empty tomb challenged his own despair. This small act of seeking the truth beyond the cloudy confines of his own heart and mind gave Jesus the opportunity to respond.

 **Are we drawing hope, strength and energy from Peter's experience as we face our own journey back to God's grace?**

Peter is not changing anything on his own, but he is positioning himself to be the recipient of the changes that God wants him to have through Christ.

Changing our state of mind is never as easy as we'd like it to be. After taking the first step, we then need to commit to the next step.

**Peter was plainly shown the glory of the risen Lord Jesus.  
As his doubts diminished, what would now be required of him?**

To be a true disciple of Christ means that we are blessed with God's grace, and we are also required to live in accordance with that grace. As Jesus' own human life showed, this is not an easy or necessarily comfortable task. Before his ascension to God, Jesus would clearly show Peter what would be required of him.

Peter is finding a way to claw his way back, not because he is creating the way, but because he is following the things put in front of him.



**1 Peter 1:14:** *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts (or desires) which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.*



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**SECOND REPAIRING AND RESTORING POINT: BE SERIOUS AND REVERENT AS YOU BEGIN TO REFOCUS YOUR ATTENTION ON GOD'S GRACE THROUGH JESUS IN YOUR LIFE.**



**THIRD REPAIRING AND RESTORING POINT:** EMBRACE THE FORGIVENESS AND GRACE WE ARE GIVEN AND INTENTIONALLY WORK AT LIVING A CHANGED LIFE AS A RESULT.

PETER WAS FIRMLY ON THE ROAD BACK TO TRUE SERVICE AND DEVOTION TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST BUT STILL NEEDED MORE. RECOVERING FROM THE DEPTH OF HIS FALL WOULD TAKE TIME AND MANY SMALL STEPS. PETER'S GREATEST HEALING WOULD COME FROM JESUS' APPEARANCE TO THE DISCIPLES ON THE SHORES OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.

This is another pair of beautiful bookends in Peter's life:

(Luke 5:1-11)

Remember, we began with the miraculous catch of fish, where Peter fell at Jesus' feet because he was unworthy. This is when he left everything to follow Jesus.

(John 21:1-14)

But now, Peter failed his friend and had no idea what to do, so he went back to fishing. This time the resurrected Jesus stood on the shore and called out to Peter and the other disciples and again a miracle of fish was provided. They joyfully recognized him, and Jesus pulled Peter over to the side for a private conversation.

Jesus would now demonstrate his confidence in Peter's potential. We need to revisit our potential and God's past and present providences in our lives! Regularly noting the ways God has worked in our lives can help shift our focus from what's lacking to the abundant blessings we've received. Consider keeping a Gratitude Journal or naming your blessings out loud.

If we have strayed, there are a lot of steps we can put in place to take small steps back.

Let's look at the interchange between Jesus and Peter by the Sea of Galilee.

**Jesus' first question:**

**John 21:15:** *So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you **love** <25> me more than these? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I **love** <5368> you. He said to him, Tend my lambs.*

Jesus is asking, *Do you (agape) love me?*

*Agape* denotes a selfless, sacrificial love—the kind associated with divine love.

Peter answers, *Yes, Lord; you know that I (phileo) love you.*

*Phileo* refers to affectionate, brotherly love—a deep friendship or emotional connection. It conveys warmth and closeness, often used for relationships between friends or family.

Peter is responding with what he believes he can handle. Jesus is asking him for the highest level.



*Tend my lambs, the young, the immature sheep of Jesus' flock.*

Jesus would only give this mission to one who could be trusted. This was not arbitrary or tentative—Jesus said, this is what you are called for. *Tend my lambs.*

### Jesus' second question:

**John 21:16:** *He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love <25> me? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love <5368> you. He said to him, Shepherd my sheep.*

It's the exact same question and the exact same answer. *Do you selflessly love me? Yes, I brotherly love you.* Jesus now gives him more responsibility than just feeding and tending, *Shepherd my sheep.*



*Shepherd my sheep, the more mature sheep who need guidance and direction.*

Sheep left on their own need constant help! Jesus is asking Peter to take that role. Jesus would only give this mission to one who has taken on a new vocation and new direction. Even though Peter is still clawing his way back, Jesus sees the potential in Peter and asks him to take this role. *Shepherd my sheep.*

### Jesus' third question:

**John 21:17:** *He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love <5368> me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Do you love <5368> me? And he said to him, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love <5368> you. Jesus said to him, Tend my sheep.*

Jesus asks a third time, but this time he says it differently. When he asks, *Simon, son of John, do you love me?* This is not the selfless love. He is now challenging Peter's brotherly love. *Peter, do you brotherly love me?* Peter is grieved because he already answered this twice. *You know all things; you know that I love you...* Jesus says, *Tend my sheep...*

Jesus is putting Peter into a position of expanding his whole life in a way he never could have seen before.



*Tend my sheep, the weak sheep, weak in faith who are to be fed and cared for.*

Jesus would only give this mission to one who could understand weakness and give what is necessary to overcome it because they have been there. We have just seen how Peter had been there. The brotherly love is such an important thing. Jesus is telling Peter that he will need to use everything, every part of himself and what he has learned from his experiences to accomplish the mission Jesus is giving him.

Peter would now begin to embrace the forgiveness and grace given to him. He would begin to see that from Jesus' perspective, his heart and potential were bigger than his failure. Jesus saw it, and now Peter could see that his heart and potential, through the eyes of Jesus, were bigger than his failure. Peter just needed faith in Jesus' judgment to believe it.

*Moments with the Savior* by Ken Gire: "After the meal, Jesus takes Peter aside. What he says is remarkable. What he doesn't say is even more so. He doesn't say: "Some friend you turned out to be... I'm really disappointed in you... You let me down... You're all talk... Coward... Boy, was I ever wrong about you... And you call yourself a disciple?" Instead, he asks simply, "Do you love me?" He asks three times, once for each denial. Not to rub it in, but to give Peter an opportunity to openly confess his love. Something Peter desperately needs to verbalize... But Jesus is not there to inflict pain; he is there to relieve it.... "Feed my sheep, Peter." Jesus' way of saying, "I still believe in you... I still think you're the right man for the job."

Peter is being drawn back to his harmony with God's will through Jesus' belief in his potential. Peter is following the drawing of the Father through Christ, and this is a lesson for us. Look at the circumstances so we can be drawn back.

While we're not given such a massive responsibility, we are responsible for passionately clinging to the changed life we have been given, no matter what kind of self-imposed alienation we are carrying. We are to cling to what we are to become, individually, as part of the body of Christ.

**Philippians 3:12–16:** *12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect (mature or complete), have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; 16 however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.*

Like Peter, we need to focus on:



- Forgetting those things which are behind us
- Stretching towards those things which are before us
- Pressing towards the goal of the upward call

Peter was about to learn all of this.

Our own walk is a learning experience. He needed to be shown step-by-step; we need to watch for the steps the Lord shows us.



If we love God and truly want to follow Christ despite our missteps and failures, then let us follow the Apostle Peter's example. Let us begin with taking positive steps towards reestablishing our faith, be serious and reverent as we reset our minds and embrace the forgiveness and grace that God has called us to.

Let's keep in mind those three things:

- Take action—take positive steps towards reestablishing our faith.
- Be serious and reverent in resetting our minds.
- Embrace the forgiveness and grace God has called us to.

**Psalms 34:15-16,18:** *15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

When we have walked away, gotten lost and made mistakes; when we have just gone in the wrong direction, this is the God who is waiting on the other side for us to simply stop, turn, reset our attention and begin taking those little steps back toward our Father in heaven who loves us with all His heart. Let's do what the Apostle Peter did.

**So, how do I reconnect with God?  
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



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## Bonus Material and Study Questions

### Recommended additional study:

#### **Ep.1386: I Am a Christian, So Who Am I?**

*Defining what true Christianity requires of every disciple of Jesus*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1386-true-christian/>

#### **Ep.1158: Has My Christianity Been Compromised?**

*Where and when compromises should be avoided or accepted*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1158-compromise/>

#### **Ep.1308: What Is Your Ebenezer?**

*The power of biblically remembering past troubles and victories*

<https://christianquestions.com/inspiration/1308-ebenezer/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with this short, animated video for kids at [ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube](https://christianquestions.com/YouTube):

- **How can we praise God?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/praise/>
- **How can we make God happy?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/how-to-make-god-happy/>
- **What happened on the way to Emmaus?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/the-road-to-emmaus/>



**Commentaries and translations that indicate Peter was one of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus:**

**Luke 24:33–35:** *33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon. 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how he was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.*

**Here are a few interesting thoughts and interpretations on the meaning of these verses:**

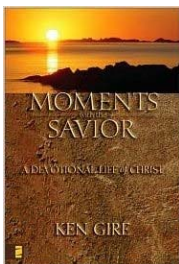
(Source: John Gill's Exposition of the Bible) Verse 34. Saying the following words; and which are not the words of the two disciples, but of the apostles, whom they found gathered together; and who, just as these two entered the room, said to one another, or rather to these two disciples, to whom at once, and as soon as ever they saw them, not being able to hold it in, they communicated the good news they had just heard, and which; perhaps, Peter had been just telling them:

(Source: Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible) Verse 34 [Saying, The Lord] is [risen indeed]. The meaning here is, that these two disciples found the apostles, and those who were with them, unanimously testifying that Christ had risen from the dead. It is not the two disciples to whom we are to refer the word λεγοντας, [saying]; but to the body of the disciples. See the note on Mark 16:12.

(Source: John Lightfoot) That these are the words of the Eleven appears from the case in which the word the eleven is put. They found the eleven and them that were with them, saying. They having returned from Emmaus, found the eleven and the rest, saying to them, when they came into their presence, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.'

**Luke 24: 33–35:** (ACV) *33 And having risen up the same hour, they returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven gathered together, 34 and those who were with them who said, The Lord really was raised, and was seen by Simon. 35 And they reported the things on the road, and how he was made known to them during the breaking of the bread.*

**Luke 24: 33–35:** (Concordant) *33 And rising in the same hour, they return to Jerusalem and found the eleven convened together and those with them, 34 who said that really roused was the Lord, and was seen by Simon! 35 And they unfolded the events on the road, and how he is known to them in the breaking of the bread.*



*Moments with the Savior*, by Ken Gire: That intimate moment proved to be a turning point in Peter's life. Within seven weeks, he would preach the boldest sermon of his life. It would be in Jerusalem, the bastion of hatred against Jesus. Three thousand would be saved. They would form the nucleus of the church he would establish there. Later, he would stand before Caiaphas himself and the entire ruling council that had conspired against Christ. He would stand up to them in a bold confession for his Savior. And he would go on preaching about his crucified Lord, shaking the foundations of the Temple and sending a tremor to rock even the mighty pillars of the Roman Empire.

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1389: How Do I Reconnect With God?

See:



<https://christianquestions.com/character/1389-reconnect/>

1. What did Jesus tell his disciples, and Peter in particular, before going to Gethsemane?  
What was Peter's reaction? How is this a warning to us about our own attitude? (Matthew 26:31-35)
2. **Peter's Devastation:** (Matthew 26:69-75)
  - a. First Denial: When and where did this happen? Why did Peter lie? (verses 69-70)
    - Have you ever been caught up in the heat of the moment and denied a truth that you knew?
  - b. Second Denial: What happened here? How was this different from the first? (verses 71-72)
    - Have you done something similar? Have you lied, then had to back up that lie?
  - c. Third Denial: How did this third denial develop? What drove this last denial? (verses 73-75)
    - Luke 22:61—what might Peter have been thinking at this moment?
3. **1 Peter 1:13**: What are the three **Repairing and Restoring** points in this scripture that show us the way back to God? (Psalms 34:15-18)  
Be specific and use scriptural support for each point.
4. **Peter's Restoration:** (John 21:15-17)
  - a. First Question: What is Jesus asking Peter? How does Jesus' question differ from Peter's answer?
    - What is the mission Jesus gives Peter?
  - b. Second Question: What is Jesus asking Peter?
    - How has Peter's mission expanded after this question?
  - c. Third Question: How does Jesus' question change?
    - Why is Peter uniquely qualified to take on this mission?
5. When have you experienced a time in your life when you drifted away from God? After this study, how will you hold onto the promise that the Lord waits for us to turn back towards Him and will help us to find Him again? What will be your first small step?
6. **Philippians 3:12-16**: How will you focus on:
  - a. Forgetting those things which are behind you?
  - b. Stretching towards those things before you?
  - c. Pressing towards the goal of the call of God in Christ Jesus?