

Truth Over Trauma

*A Restorative Discipleship Guide to Healing Through Believing the Gospel*

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Truth Over Trauma | A Restorative Discipleship Guide to Healing Through Believing the Gospel

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First Love Fellowship, SSM is a church in the State of Oklahoma

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From the Author

I see my story as an unfolding manuscript; its pages still being written with each passing day. A deep mandate burns within me: to win the church to Christ. This calling manifests in diverse ways—tirelessly studying and crafting messages that draw people to God, kneeling beside an addict to offer hope amid despair, or sitting with a polished professional, unraveling the hidden wounds of their soul as they wrestle with inner turmoil. In every encounter, a steadfast promise shines through—wholeness is attainable, and the Word of God stands as the singular remedy for the fallen human condition. *The gospel is the answer to everything.*

Over the years, I have witnessed the profound transformative power of what has now become Restorative Discipleship and the Truth Over Trauma healing practice. These are not mere concepts; they are lifelines, lifting individuals from the depths of brokenness—whether the jagged edges of addiction or the silent fractures beneath a “perfect” life. There is a sacred beauty in watching as the Word of Christ reveals to people that pain and trauma do not define them. It is a privilege to be part of this process as the power of the Holy Spirit works miracles.

First Love Fellowship, the church I pastor, serves as the heartbeat of this mission. More than a mere gathering, it is a living vessel where unceasing prayer, intentional discipleship, and missional living are not only taught but embodied. I see this truth in our community’s unity and in lives reshaped by grace. We model what it means to follow Christ through every action, sermon, and shared meal.

Rooted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, First Love Fellowship began as a place to plant these seeds, where I serve as a minister—tending the flock and calling the lost home. Beyond Tulsa, I oversee this growing vision alongside leaders across the country who share this same passion, extending our reach with every step. I am inspired by how these leaders carry the gospel’s healing power to their own corners of the world, which tells me this story is not mine alone; it is interwoven with those I serve, teach, and journey beside, including you.

As you open “Truth Over Trauma: The Restorative Discipleship Healing Process,” I invite you, prospective instructors, to join me in this sacred work. I urge you to commit wholeheartedly to prayer and worship to anchor yourself in God’s truth. By doing so, you can guide others out of trauma’s grip into freedom, supported by a vibrant church community and the living Word, where every moment reflects His redeeming love. Your calling is significant—take it up with dedication, and together, let us together, win the church to Christ.

For Zion’s Sake,

Niral Russell Burnett, Sr.

Pastor, First Love Fellowship

# Section 1: The Truth Makes Us Free!

**Objective:** Equip Restorative Discipleship Instructors to present a comprehensive gospel narrative that traces God’s redemptive plan from creation to the New Covenant, helping disciples understand their identity and freedom in Christ, rooted in the truth that sets them free (John 8:31-36).

1. **Instructions for Restorative Discipleship Instructors:**
   1. Begin sessions by grounding disciples in the biblical story, showing how God’s plan unfolds through key events and covenants. Remember, the Bible is the redemptive story of mankind.
   2. Use scripture to illustrate each stage, emphasizing God’s sovereignty and grace over human rebellion and trauma.
   3. Encourage disciples to see themselves within this narrative—not as victims, but as rebels and villains from the fall in God’s redemptive story, called to repentance and freedom through belief in the gospel.
2. **Key Stages of the Gospel Narrative:**
   1. **Creation and Innocence (Genesis 1:26-28)**
      1. Highlight God’s original design: humanity blessed with purpose and dominion in the image of God—“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Genesis 1:26-28).
   2. **Dominion Granted and Lost (Genesis 2:15-17, Romans 6:16)** 
      1. God placed Adam and Eve as rulers over creation, with dominion tied to obedience: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17).
      2. Romans 6:16: “To whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness.” Disobedience enslaved them to sin and Satan.
   3. **The Serpent’s Deception (Genesis 3:1-6, Revelation 12:9)** 
      1. The serpent (Satan) questioned God’s command—“Has God indeed said…?” (Genesis 3:1)—and lied, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4), aiming to usurp humanity’s dominion.
      2. Eve and Adam’s choice to eat transferred their allegiance, resulting in shame and loss: “They knew that they were naked” (Genesis 3:7).
   4. **A Marred Image and Fallen Legacy (Genesis 5:1-3, Genesis 4:1-8)** 
      1. Originally made in God’s likeness (Genesis 5:1), Adam’s offspring bore his fallen image (Genesis 5:3), seen in Cain’s murder of Abel—a corrupted heritage of sin.
   5. **The Cost of Sin (Genesis 2:17, Romans 6:23)** 
      1. Sin’s payout was death—physical and spiritual—separating humanity from God: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).
   6. **The Promise of Hope: Protoevangelium (Genesis 3:15).**
      1. God’s curse on the serpent—“He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel”—foreshadows a Redeemer, initiating the redemptive plan through the covenants.
   7. **Redemptive Covenants:**
      1. **Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3, 15:18-21, 17:5, 22:17):** God chooses Abraham to bless all nations, promising land, descendants, and a seed—“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).
      2. **Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 34:28):** God establishes Israel through the Law, written on tablets, calling for holiness (Exodus 34:28).
      3. **Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16, 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, 2 Chronicles 6:16):** God promises an eternal kingdom through David’s line—“your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16).
      4. **New Covenant Promise (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:24-27):** God pledges forgiveness and heart transformation—“I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26-27).
   8. **The New Covenant in Christ (Hebrews 9:11-17):**
      1. Emphasize Jesus’ death as the fulfillment of all covenants, breaking the power of sin with His blood, establishing His kingdom through the church, and restoring humanity to God’s righteous image (Hebrews 9:11-17).
      2. Note God’s priority to separate us from sin, portraying humanity as *rebels* needing repentance, not victims.
3. **The Truth Which Makes Us Free (John 8:23-38):**
   1. **Core Principle:** If truth makes us free, lies keep us in bondage (John 8:32). The kingdom of darkness uses lies to blind (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), while God’s truth liberates.
   2. **Dependence Segment (John 8:23-24):** Highlight the peril of unbelief—“You will die in your sins if you do not believe that I am He” (John 8:24).
      1. You are from beneath; I am from above.
      2. You are of this world; I am not of this world.
      3. Unbelief leads to death in sin.
   3. **Assurance Segment (John 8:25-30):** Reveal the remedy—Jesus as God’s true messenger, pleasing the Father.
      1. He who sent Me is true; I speak what I heard from Him.
      2. I am He, doing nothing of Myself, with the Father always.
   4. **Offer Segment (John 8:31-36):** Apply the remedy—abiding in Christ’s Word brings freedom.
      1. “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed” (John 8:31).
      2. “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).
      3. “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).
4. **Discipleship Application:**
   1. Help disciples recognize the gospel not only reframes the story of all humanity, but it also reframes their story—not defined by trauma but by God’s redemptive purpose – His truth!
   2. *Stress repentance as the entry point to freedom (John 8:31-36; Romans 1:16).*

Section 1: The Truth Makes Us Free!

Trauma leaves deep imprints on the human soul, often convincing individuals they are victims of an unchangeable fate. Yet, the gospel offers a different narrative—one of redemption, identity, and freedom rooted in the truth that sets us free (John 8:31-36). For Restorative Discipleship Instructors, the task is to equip disciples with a comprehensive understanding of God’s redemptive plan, tracing it from creation to the New Covenant. This teaching explores how instructors can present this narrative, emphasizing the pivotal role of God’s covenants in revealing His sovereignty and grace for fallen humanity. By grounding disciples in this biblical story, instructors help them see themselves not as victims but as beneficiaries in God’s redemptive work, called to repentance and freedom through belief in the gospel. The covenants—Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenant—stand as pillars of this redemptive plan, each building toward Christ’s total redemption through Calvary.

**Instructions for Restorative Discipleship Instructors**

Instructors must begin by grounding disciples in the biblical story, a sweeping narrative that unfolds through key events and covenants. This approach provides a panoramic view of God’s plan, showing how every stage—from creation’s innocence to humanity’s rebellion and ultimate redemption—reflects His unchanging intent to restore. Scripture is the cornerstone, with instructors using specific passages to illustrate each phase, emphasizing God’s sovereignty over chaos and His grace amid human failure. For a disciple burdened by trauma’s weight, this narrative counters despair with purpose, revealing a God who reigns over all.

The covenants are central to this story, and instructors must highlight their progression, showing how they address humanity’s falleness. Disciples are encouraged to see themselves within this narrative—not as passive casualties of their past but as active beneficiaries in God’s redemptive mission. John 8:31-36 becomes a rallying cry: “If you abide in My word… you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” This freedom, rooted in repentance and belief, reframes their identity from brokenness to belovedness, a shift the covenants make possible.

**Key Stages of the Gospel Narrative**

The gospel narrative begins with **Creation and Innocence** (Genesis 1:26-28), where God’s original design shines forth: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.” Humanity, made in God’s image, is endowed with purpose and dominion, a state of harmony unmarred by trauma. This is the baseline of God’s intent, a world where identity is secure and relationships flourish—a stark contrast to the chaos trauma later introduces.

Here, humanity—embodied in Adam and Eve—is endowed with purpose and dominion, crafted in God’s likeness to reflect His character and steward His creation. This was a state of harmony, where fellowship with God was unbroken, and the earth flourished under human care. Yet, this beginning soon gave way to a catastrophic fall, a rupture that severed mankind from its divine destiny and necessitated a redemption only Jesus Christ could provide—a redemption that restores the soul to its primal purity and reclaims the dominion lost to sin.

**The Fall: A Loss of Dominion and Image**

In the Garden, God placed Adam and Eve as rulers over creation, granting them dominion over every living thing (Genesis 2:15-17). Their only restriction was a single command: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” This directive carried a profound principle, later echoed by Paul in Romans 6:16: “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” Obedience to God would sustain their divine fellowship and authority, but yielding to another would enslave them to that master. Enter the serpent, described in Genesis 3:1 as “more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” This creature, identified elsewhere as Satan (Revelation 12:9), harbored a motive: to usurp the dominion God had bestowed upon humanity.

The serpent’s approach was subtle yet devastating. He questioned Eve, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). This seeded doubt about God’s goodness, and his subsequent lie—“You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4)—directly contradicted God’s warning, promising instead a godlike knowledge of good and evil. Eve, swayed by the deception, ate the fruit and shared it with Adam, who stood by and partook willingly (Genesis 3:6). In that moment, they chose disobedience, transferring their allegiance from God to the serpent. The consequences were immediate and profound: “The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Genesis 3:7). Shame entered where innocence once reigned, and the dominion they held slipped into the hands of their new master, Satan, the fallen cherub who sought to rule through rebellion.

This fall was not merely a personal failing but a cosmic shift. The image of God in humanity—marked by righteousness, holiness, and fellowship—was marred. Genesis 5:1-3 reveals the enduring impact: “In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God… And Adam… begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.” Where Adam was created in God’s image, his offspring bore his fallen likeness, a tainted reflection of sin and rebellion. Cain’s murder of Abel (Genesis 4:1-8) exemplifies this corrupted heritage, as even the first family produced fruit after Adam’s broken nature rather than God’s perfect design. The dominion over creation was lost, and humanity became enslaved to sin, pride, and self-centeredness—slaves to the serpent’s dominion. As John Wesley articulates in *A Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, salvation is not just deliverance from hell but *“a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature.”* The fall stripped away this purity, leaving mankind in bondage, a condition that demanded an extraordinary price for restoration.

**The Cost of Sin and the Promise of Hope**

The payout of sin, as God warned, was death—both physical and spiritual (Genesis 2:17). Adam and Eve’s choice introduced mortality where eternal life once prevailed, and their spiritual separation from God left them, and all their descendants, under sin’s curse. Romans 6:23 encapsulates this grim reality: “For the wages of sin is death.” Yet, within this judgment, God wove a thread of hope. In Genesis 3:15, known as the protoevangelium, He declared to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” This promise foreshadowed a Redeemer—the Seed of the woman—who would crush Satan’s power, albeit at the cost of His own suffering. The fall was not the end of God’s plan but the beginning of a redemptive narrative, one where He would reclaim what was lost through an act of divine sacrifice.

This loss was not a defeat of God’s sovereignty. Far from being outwitted, God orchestrated redemption from the outset. The serpent’s apparent victory was a hollow one, as the deeper story reveals a purposeful design to restore humanity and the earth. As 1 John 3:8 states, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” The fall’s effects—death, bondage, and a marred image—set the stage for a redemption so costly it required the death of God’s own Son. The price Adam paid with his disobedience would be matched by the price Christ paid on the cross, a death that would undo sin’s dominion and reconcile humanity to its Creator.

**Redemption Through Jesus Christ**

Redemption, from the Greek *apolytrōsis*, signifies a release secured by a ransom payment. Colossians 1:13-23 paints a vivid picture of this divine transaction: “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Jesus, the image of the invisible God and the firstborn over all creation, paid the ransom with His blood, reconciling “all things to Himself… having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Once alienated by sin, humanity is now presented “holy, and blameless, and above reproach” through faith in Him. This redemption fulfills the protoevangelium, crushing Satan’s head (Genesis 3:15) and dismantling his works (1 John 3:8).

The cross addresses the dual problem of sin’s guilt and God’s justice. Humanity’s fallen nature, evident in our inability to keep God’s Law (Exodus 20:1-17), renders us guilty before a holy God. James 2:10 warns, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” Even a single transgression—coveting, lying, or dishonoring parents—condemns us, and God’s goodness demands justice: “by no means clearing the guilty” (Exodus 34:7). Yet, His mercy longs to forgive. Isaiah 53:4-11 resolves this tension: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities… The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Jesus, the sinless Lamb, bore the wrath we deserved, satisfying God’s justice while extending His grace. Romans 3:24-26 affirms this: “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith.”

Through Christ, the dominion lost to Satan is reclaimed. Colossians 1:16-17 declares that all things—thrones, dominions, principalities, powers—were created through and for Him, and His death restores humanity’s place as stewards under His lordship. The image of God, once marred, is renewed, as believers are transformed into Christ’s likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is not merely a future hope but a present reality. As John Wesley emphasizes, salvation is “a present deliverance from sin,” restoring the soul to its original purity and fellowship with God. The gospel, as Romans 1:16 proclaims, “is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes,” breaking every chain of bondage—fear, shame, pride—and granting freedom indeed (John 8:36).

**The Human Dilemma and God’s Solution**

God’s goodness poses a paradox: He is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,” yet “by no means clearing the guilty” (Exodus 34:6-7). Our sinful nature drives us from Him, into self-interest and rebellion, evident from childhood (Galatians 3:22). The Law, given in Exodus 20, reveals our guilt—none can perfectly obey its commands—and serves as a tutor leading us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Left to ourselves, we are undone, separated by sin from a God who loves us yet must judge evil. Jesus bridges this gap, becoming the “guilty” one who would not be cleared. By bearing our iniquities (Isaiah 53:11), He removes the barrier, allowing God to embrace us as His children without compromising His justice. The cross turns wrath into love, guilt into grace, and slavery into sonship.

**A Disciple’s Appeal to Surrender**

The fall of man was a tragic surrender to sin, but redemption through Jesus Christ offers a glorious reversal—a chance to surrender to grace. This is what disciples must understand. The gospel is not just a story; it is the power to set them free. Admonish them here, telling them something like: “Perhaps you feel the weight of your own fall—guilt from past choices, shame from wounds inflicted, or bondage to patterns you cannot break. Jesus stands ready to redeem you. He paid the price with His blood, not because you earned it, but because He loves you. Romans 10:9-10 invites you: *‘If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.’ Surrender your life to Him today. Acknowledge your need, trust His sacrifice, and let Him restore your soul.’”* Here, you can lead them in a prayer of rededication: *“Lord Jesus, I confess my sinful state and need for You. I believe You died to take away my sins, and rose again. I surrender my life to You—make me new.”* In that moment of convicted rededication, the dominion lost in Eden is reclaimed in their heart, and the disciple steps into the freedom of God’s family.

From the innocence of Eden to the fall’s devastating loss, humanity’s story is one of rupture and restoration. The dominion and divine image bestowed in Genesis 1:26-28 were forfeited to sin, enslaving us to Satan’s rule. Yet, God’s redemptive plan, culminating in Jesus Christ, paid the ultimate price to reclaim what was lost. Through His blood, we are delivered from darkness, reconciled to God, and renewed in His likeness. The fall’s legacy of death is overturned by the cross’s gift of life, offering salvation as a present restoration to holiness and love. This is the gospel’s power—to heal, to free, and to redeem—and it beckons each of us to embrace the Savior who makes all things new.

**The Redemptive Covenants: Pillars of God’s Plan**

The covenants form the backbone of God’s redemptive narrative, each addressing trauma’s root—sin—and restoring humanity’s identity. Instructors are encouraged to emphasize their progression and fulfillment, offering disciples a tangible framework for healing.

The **Abrahamic Covenant** (Genesis 12:1-3, 15:18-21, 17:5, 22:17) initiates God’s rescue plan. God calls Abraham: “I will make you a great nation… and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3). This promise of land (15:18-21), a new name—Abraham, “father of many nations” (17:5)—and countless descendants (22:17). For a disciple feeling purposeless, this covenant reveals God’s intent to bless through them, a seed of hope pointing to Christ. God binds Himself to Abraham, demonstrating grace over human failure, a foundation for identity restoration.

The **Mosaic Covenant** (Exodus 34:28) builds on this, establishing Israel as God’s holy nation. After the exodus, God gives the Law on tablets: “He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (Exodus 34:28). This covenant calls for holiness, addressing sin’s chaos that trauma exploits. It’s conditional—obedience brings blessing, disobedience curses (Deuteronomy 28)—yet God’s grace shines through in His provision of atonement (Leviticus 16). For a disciple wrestling with guilt, the Mosaic Covenant offers structure and a path to reconciliation, foreshadowing a deeper cleansing.

The **Davidic Covenant** (2 Samuel 7:12-16, 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, 2 Chronicles 6:16) promises permanence: “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:16). God assures David an eternal dynasty, fulfilled in Christ, the eternal King. This covenant counters instability offering an eternal kingdom to come unshaken by human rebellion. A disciple facing repeated failures finds solace here: their identity rests in a King whose reign endures, a promise echoed in Chronicles and solidified in Christ’s lineage.

The **New Covenant Promise** (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:24-27) addresses the heart of trauma—sin’s separation. God pledges, “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts… For I will forgive their iniquity” (Jeremiah 31:33-34). Ezekiel 36:26-27 adds, “I will give you a new heart… and put My Spirit within you.” This covenant promises internal transformation, not just external obedience, restoring the soul. For a disciple scarred by spiritual trauma—feeling God has failed—this is the ultimate gift, announced through the testimony of the gospel, which is the answer to *everything*.

**The New Covenant in Christ: The Answer to Everything**

The **New Covenant in Christ** (Hebrews 9:11-17) fulfills all prior covenants, breaking sin’s power and restoring God’s image in humanity. Hebrews 9:11-17 describes Jesus as High Priest, entering “with His own blood… having obtained eternal redemption.” His death seals the testament, redeeming transgressions under earlier covenants and establishing His kingdom through the church. This is the climax of God’s plan—Abraham’s seed blesses all nations, the Law’s holiness is internalized, and David’s throne endures forever in Christ.

God’s priority is to separate humanity from sin, not coddling us as victims. Jesus’ sacrifice demands repentance, as John 8:24 warns: “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” People will not repent for being a victim, alone. Neither should they. If God calls “all men, everywhere” to repent (Acts 17:30), then it stands to reason that there a sin problem that everyone has. No one is innocent – not even victims.

Sin is designed to separate people from God. This was the agenda of Satan from the beginning. Repentance is the cure. The mercy of God is the cure. A disciple trapped in shame learns they are not defined by trauma but by Christ’s righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). This restoration—freedom from sin’s bondage—echoes John 8:36: “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” The covenants converge here, offering identity as God’s children and purpose as His ambassadors.

From creation’s innocence to humanity’s rebellions, the story pivots on God’s redemptive promises—Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New—each addressing humanity’s chaos with grace and purpose. Instructors should ground disciples in this narrative, using scripture to highlight God’s sovereignty and encourage participation through repentance and belief. The New Covenant in Christ fulfills these promises, breaking sin’s power and restoring freedom. For disciples, this is where the truth of the New Covenant liberates them to live as God intended—whole, purposeful, and free.

**The Truth Which Makes Us Free: Unlocking Freedom Through Truth**

Freedom is a universal longing, yet many remain shackled—not by physical chains, but by the invisible bonds of lies they believe. The power of truth to liberate is foundational, drawing from Jesus’ profound declaration in John 8:31-36: “If you abide in My word…you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

**Lies as the Root of Bondage**

The premise is simple yet profound: If the truth makes a person free, then it stands to reason that many people are in bondage because of lies—lies they believe. Trauma often serves as the soil where these lies take root, convincing individuals they are worthless, unlovable, or doomed to fail. A child abandoned by a parent might internalize, “I’m not worth staying for,” a lie that governs their relationships and self-worth into adulthood. This bondage is not merely emotional—it’s spiritual, chaining the soul to despair and distancing it from God’s reality. Jesus’ words in John 8:32—“the truth shall make you free”—imply that freedom hinges on rejecting these falsehoods and embracing what is real.

This dynamic is timeless: “This is always how it has been.” The kingdom of darkness, led by the “father of lies” (John 8:44), seeks to keep humanity in shadow by peddling deception. From Eden’s first lie—“You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4)—to trauma’s whispers of inadequacy, the enemy’s strategy remains consistent: obscure the truth to maintain control. In contrast, the kingdom of God beckons us into light through truth, as Romans 6:17 notes: “You have obeyed the form of doctrine which was delivered to you.” This obedience to God’s Word—His doctrine—ushers us from darkness to liberation, a battle waged in the mind and spirit.

Once a lie is believed, its destructive power multiplies: “The devil has little need to attack you because you will spend the rest of your life attacking God, yourself, and others.” A disciple who believes “God doesn’t care” after a loss might resent Him, turning prayer into silence. Self-loathing festers as they deem themselves defective, while bitterness poisons relationships with others. This self-perpetuating cycle—rooted in lies—illustrates why truth is essential: *without it, bondage becomes a life sentence.*

**John 8:23-38: The Path to Freedom**

Jesus’ teaching in John 8:23-38, delivered to a mixed crowd of skeptics and believers, unveils the truth that liberates. He confronts their spiritual state head-on, offering a remedy through belief. This passage, rich with theological depth, breaks into three segments: Dependence, Assurance, and Offer, each revealing a facet of freedom’s foundation.

**Dependence Segment: The Peril of Unbelief and the Fact That We Need Him**

Jesus begins with a stark contrast: “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23). This establishes a divide—humanity’s earthly origin versus His divine authority. The consequence is dire: “You will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Unbelief is the linchpin of bondage; without faith in Jesus’ identity as the Messiah, sin’s grip remains unbroken. A disciple trapped by guilt might see this as a mirror: their refusal to trust Christ’s forgiveness keeps them enslaved to shame. Jesus underscores dependence—we need Him, for apart from His truth, death in sin is inevitable. This peril awakens the soul to its desperate need, setting the stage for hope.

**Assurance Segment: The Revealing of the Remedy**

Amid confusion—“Who are You?” (John 8:25)—Jesus offers assurance: “He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him” (John 8:26). His words are not His own but the Father’s, affirming their reliability. He declares, “I am He” (John 8:28), echoing the divine “I AM” of Exodus 3:14, and insists, “I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things” (John 8:28). This unity with the Father—“He who sent Me is with Me… for I always do those things that please Him” (John 8:29)—grounds His authority. For a disciple doubting God’s presence after trauma, this is a treasure of healing: Jesus is the faithful Son, never abandoned, offering a remedy they can trust. As many believed (John 8:30), the truth’s power to shift hearts emerges, paving the way for its application.

**Offer Segment: Instruction to Apply the Remedy**

To those who believed, Jesus extends an offer: “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Abiding—remaining steadfast in His teachings—is the condition. Knowledge of truth follows, breaking bondage’s chains. The Jews protest, “We… have never been in bondage” (John 8:33), blind to their slavery to sin. Jesus clarifies, “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin… but if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:34-36). Freedom here is not political but spiritual—release from sinful response patterns like fear or resentment. A disciple who lashes out in anger, believing “I’m powerless,” can abide in John 16:33—“In Me you may have peace”—and find freedom from that pattern. Jesus, the Son, offers a permanent liberation, transforming slaves into sons who abide forever.

**Applying the Truth to Trauma**

These segments—Dependence, Assurance, and Offer—form a blueprint for healing trauma’s wounds. The Dependence segment confronts the lie that we can save ourselves, revealing our need for Christ. A disciple who believes “I’m beyond redemption” after moral failure faces John 8:24’s warning: unbelief seals their fate. Instructors guide them to depend on Jesus, trusting His power over sin’s penalty.

The Assurance segment counters doubts about God’s reliability. Trauma often breeds mistrust—“If God loved me, why did this happen?”—but Jesus’ unity with the Father (John 8:29) assures disciples of His truthfulness. Instructors might point to Romans 8:38-39—“Nothing can separate us from the love of God”—rebuilding confidence in His presence, even in pain’s aftermath.

The Offer segment is the practical step: abiding in the Word. For a disciple chained to “I’m alone” after abandonment, instructors assign John 14:18—“I will not leave you orphans”—encouraging daily meditation. As they know this truth, freedom dawns—loneliness fades, replaced by Christ’s companionship. This freedom is not fleeting but enduring, as John 8:36 promises: “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

**Freedom Through Truth**

The truth that makes us free is not abstract—it’s the living Word of Christ, dismantling the lies that bind us. The kingdom of darkness thrives on deception, but the kingdom of God offers light through belief in Jesus’ identity and teachings. John 8:23-38 reveals this through Dependence, showing our need; Assurance, proving Christ’s trustworthiness; and Offer, providing the path to liberty. Once believed, lies lose their power, halting the cycle of attacking God, self, and others. For disciples in Truth Over Trauma, this is the heart of healing: abiding in the Word, knowing the truth, and stepping into the freedom Christ secures—a freedom that transforms bondage into sonship, darkness into light, and trauma into triumph.

# Section 1 Discussion Questions:

The Truth Makes Us Free

1. Describe the central objective of Section 1 for Restorative Discipleship Instructors. How does this objective help disciples reframe their identity in relation to trauma?
2. Explain how the gospel narrative, as outlined in Section 1, traces God’s redemptive plan from Creation to the New Covenant. Why is it important for disciples to see themselves as rebels rather than victims within this narrative?
3. Discuss the significance of the Creation and Innocence stage (Genesis 1:26-28) in the gospel narrative. How can instructors use this stage to contrast God’s original design with the effects of trauma?
4. Analyze the impact of the Fall, as described in Genesis 3:1-6 and Romans 6:16. How does the serpent’s deception illustrate the role of lies in creating spiritual bondage, and what does this mean for disciples dealing with trauma?
5. Explain the concept of the “protoevangelium” (Genesis 3:15) and its role in God’s redemptive plan. How can instructors use this promise to instill hope in disciples struggling with despair?
6. Compare and contrast the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenant promises. How do these covenants collectively address the human condition and point to Christ’s redemption?
7. In the context of John 8:31-36, describe the three segments (Dependence, Assurance, and Offer) and how they guide disciples toward freedom from trauma’s lies. Provide an example of how an instructor might apply these segments in a Restorative Discipleship session.
8. Why does the text emphasize repentance as the entry point to freedom (John 8:31-36; Romans 1:16)? How can instructors help disciples understand the importance of repentance over a victimhood mindset?
9. Discuss the role of God’s Word in dismantling lies that keep disciples in bondage, as highlighted in John 8:32 and 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. Provide an example of a specific lie a disciple might believe and how an instructor could counter it with scripture.
10. Reflect on the statement, “The gospel is the answer to everything.” How can Restorative Discipleship Instructors use the gospel narrative to help disciples see their personal story as part of God’s redemptive purpose, rather than being defined by their trauma?

# Section 2: Spiritual Respiration

**Objective:** Guide Restorative Discipleship Instructors to cultivate their own spiritual vitality, enabling intercession for traumatized individuals (Exodus 32:11-14, Mark 12:29-31; Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

1. The RD Instructor’s Rold as an Intercessor
   1. They stand in the gap for traumatized disciples, praying and guiding them toward God’s healing truth
2. **Instructions for Restorative Discipleship Instructors:**
   1. Model loving God and others as flowing from a healthy inner life (Mark 12:29-31).
   2. Reflect on drawing life from God (works of piety) and extending it to others (works of mercy).
   3. Assess unresolved trauma in yourself—seek healing to avoid projecting onto disciples.
3. **Key Practices:**
   1. **Breathe In from God:** Prayer, scripture study, worship.
   2. **Breathe Out to Others:** Acts of compassion, sharing the gospel, being a light (Matthew 5:16).
      1. Works of mercy enable participation in God’s prevenient grace, drawing people to Him.
4. **Discipleship Application:**
   1. Your spiritual health directly impacts your ability to guide disciples toward truth and healing.
   2. You cannot address others’ trauma if subject to your own unresolved wounds.

Spiritual Respiration: The Restorative Discipleship Instructor’s Intercessory Role

Intercessors are crucial because they stand between individuals and their troubles—sin, trauma, or despair—pleading for God’s mercy and intervention. Like Moses interceding for Israel (Exodus 32:11-14), they bridge the gap between human brokenness and divine grace, averting judgment and fostering healing. Without intercessors, people may remain trapped in their pain, as Ezekiel 22:30 laments the absence of someone to “stand in the breach.” In today’s world, intercessors are vital for praying over broken families, communities, or even nations, acting as conduits of God’s compassion to restore hope where darkness prevails.

**The RD Instructor’s Role as an Intercessor:**

Restorative Discipleship (RD) Instructors embody intercession by standing in the gap for traumatized disciples, praying and guiding them toward God’s healing truth. Beyond teaching, they intercede like Samuel (1 Samuel 7:8-9), lifting disciples’ burdens to God, seeking freedom from lies like “I’m unlovable.” By praying fervently, an instructor might consider Zephaniah 3:17 to affirm a disciple’s worth, countering despair. This intercessory role, empowered by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27), ensures their ministry reflects Christ’s priestly intercession (Hebrews 7:25), making them vessels of grace in the disciple’s journey from brokenness to wholeness.

In the ministry of Restorative Discipleship, instructors are not merely guides but living conduits of God’s healing truth, tasked with leading traumatized individuals toward wholeness. The objective is clear: cultivate personal spiritual vitality to enable effective ministry, as rooted in the greatest commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:29-31; Deuteronomy 6:4-5). This section explores the instructor’s role through the lens of “spiritual respiration”—a dynamic process of drawing life from God and extending it to others. By modeling this rhythm, reflecting on its biblical foundation, and addressing their own unresolved trauma, instructors become vessels of grace, equipped to guide disciples through the shadows of pain into the light of truth. Through key practices and Discipleship Applications, this process underscores a vital truth: an instructor’s spiritual health is the bedrock of their ministry, ensuring they facilitate healing rather than hinder those they serve.

**Instructions for Restorative Discipleship Instructors**

The concept of “spiritual respiration” is central to the instructor’s role, derived from the word “love” in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, and quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:29-31. It is the Hebrew word *awgab*, meaning “to breathe after” or “to long for.” It encapsulates a two-fold movement: inhaling life from God through works of piety and exhaling it to others through works of mercy. This spiritual respiration is what enables the RD Instructor to effectively act as an intercessor to those in need. Instructors must model this respiration, demonstrating a life sustained by divine connection and expressed in compassionate service. Imagine a disciple wrestling with despair after years of abuse; they need more than words—they need to see a living example of God’s sustaining breath. *By praying fervently, studying scripture diligently, and serving selflessly, instructors embody a vitality that inspires hope, showing that trauma does not have the final word.*

This respiration aligns with Mark 12:29-31, where Jesus echoes Deuteronomy 6:4-5: love for God and others flows from a healthy inner life. Instructors are urged to reflect deeply on this commandment, asking, “Is my heart fully devoted to God? Does my love for Him spill over to those I serve?” A vibrant inner life—nourished by intimacy with God—ensures that ministry is not a hollow performance but a genuine outpouring. For instance, an instructor who spends mornings in worship might approach a discipleship session with patience and empathy, reflecting God’s love rather than personal frustration. This reflection guards against burnout, keeping the instructor’s soul aligned with its divine source.

Crucially, instructors must assess their own unresolved trauma, seeking healing to avoid projecting wounds onto disciples. Trauma, if unaddressed, becomes a lens that distorts ministry. An instructor who endured childhood neglect might unconsciously assume a disciple’s withdrawal stems from ingratitude rather than pain, misjudging their need. Self-examination—perhaps through prayerful confession or seeking discipleship—uncovers these blind spots. Healing might involve journaling through past hurts with Psalm 147:3—“He heals the brokenhearted”—or confiding in their own spiritual leaders and pastor. By confronting their own “destructions” (Psalm 107:20), instructors ensure their ministry flows from wholeness, not woundedness, preserving their ability to guide with clarity, accountability and compassion.

**Key Practices: Breathing In and Out**

The practice of spiritual respiration unfolds in two deliberate acts, each essential to the instructor’s vitality and effectiveness.

**Breathe In from God: Prayer, Scripture Study, Worship**

Inhaling from God sustains the instructor’s spirit, filling them with the life needed to minister. Prayer is the lifeline—intimate, honest communion with God. An instructor might begin each day with, “Lord, renew my strength for this task,” drawing on Isaiah 40:31: “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.” This isn’t rote recitation but a desperate, joyful reaching for God’s presence, especially when trauma’s weight feels overwhelming. Scripture study deepens this connection, immersing the instructor in truth. Meditating on John 16:33—“In Me you may have peace”—equips them to face a disciple’s chaos with calm assurance. Worship, whether through song or silent adoration, lifts the soul, as Psalm 95:1 invites: “Come, let us sing to the Lord.” An instructor singing hymns during a quiet moment might find their spirit rekindled, ready to pour out to others.

These works of piety are not optional—they are the oxygen of ministry. Consider an instructor preparing to disciple a person scarred by spiritual abuse. Without prayer, they might rely on human wisdom, faltering under the complexity. Without scripture, they lack the anchor to counter lies like “God can’t be trusted.” Without worship, their spirit might wither, leaving them detached. Breathing in from God ensures they minister from abundance, not depletion, their inner life a wellspring of divine strength.

**Breathe Out to Others: Acts of Compassion, Sharing the Gospel, Being a Light**

Exhaling to others transforms this vitality into action, fulfilling the command to love one’s neighbor. Acts of compassion—listening to a disciple’s story, providing a meal, or offering a ride—mirror Christ’s care. An instructor might sit with a grieving disciple, embodying Lamentations 3:22-23: “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.” Sharing the gospel is the heartbeat of this outflow, proclaiming Christ’s victory over sin and trauma. Quoting Romans 8:1—“There is now no condemnation”—to a guilt-ridden disciple plants seeds of freedom. Being a light, as Matthew 5:16 urges—“Let your light so shine before men”—means living visibly as God’s ambassador, whether through a warm smile or steadfast integrity.

These works of mercy participate in God’s prevenient grace—the grace that precedes salvation, drawing people to Him. An instructor volunteering at a shelter might spark curiosity in a traumatized individual, nudging them toward faith. This outflow isn’t performative; it’s the natural overflow of a soul filled with God’s breath. A disciple watching an instructor’s compassion might think, “If they can love like that, maybe God can heal me too.” Breathing out ensures the instructor’s vitality blesses others, fulfilling the commandment’s dual call to love God and neighbor.

**Discipleship Application: The Impact of Spiritual Health**

The discipleship application ties these practices to their purpose: an instructor’s spiritual health directly impacts their ability to guide disciples toward truth and healing. A vibrant inner life, sustained by spiritual respiration, sharpens discernment and empathy. Imagine working with a disciple who believes “I’m unlovable” after rejection. An instructor who prays daily might sense the Spirit’s nudge to share Zephaniah 3:17—“The Lord… will rejoice over you with singing”—countering the lie with God’s delight. Scripture study might recall Ephesians 2:10—“We are His workmanship”—affirming the disciple’s worth. Worship might infuse the session with joy, softening the disciple’s defenses. This health enables precise, compassionate guidance, leading the disciple from bondage to freedom.

Conversely, unresolved trauma in the instructor sabotages this process: “You cannot address others’ trauma if subject to your own unresolved wounds.” An instructor haunted by past betrayal might misinterpret a disciple’s anger as hostility, reacting defensively rather than lovingly. Their own pain clouds judgment, projecting “You don’t trust me” onto a disciple’s struggle with “I can’t trust anyone.” This not only stalls healing but risks deepening the disciple’s wounds. Healing their own trauma—perhaps through confessing fears to God with Psalm 56:3—“When I am afraid, I put my trust in You”—restores clarity. An instructor who has faced their neglect might recognize a disciple’s withdrawal as a cry for safety, responding with patience instead of frustration.

This application demands vigilance. Instructors might journal weekly, asking, “Where am I hurting? How might it affect my ministry?” Regular retreats—time alone with God—renew their breath, while accountability with peers ensures blind spots are addressed. A healed instructor becomes a mirror of Christ’s restoration, reflecting His light into disciples’ darkness. For example, an instructor who overcame spiritual trauma might share, “I once felt God failed me, but He showed me His love in John 10:11—I am the good shepherd.” This testimony, born of personal healing, resonates, guiding the disciple toward truth.

**The Breath of Effective Ministry**

Spiritual respiration is the lifeline of the Restorative Discipleship Instructor’s role, cultivating a vitality that flows from God to others. By modeling this rhythm—breathing in through prayer, scripture, and worship, and breathing out through compassion, gospel-sharing, and shining as a light—instructors engage with the task of an intercessor. Also, reflecting on lifestyle of spiritual respiration ensures their inner life remains robust, while addressing their own trauma prevents projection, preserving ministry’s integrity. The key practices sustain this vitality, and the discipleship application ties it to impact: a healthy instructor guides disciples to truth, while an unhealed one risks harm. In this sacred dance of inhaling and exhaling, instructors become vessels of God’s prevenient grace, breathing life into traumatized souls, leading them from wounds to wholeness.

# Section 2 Discussion Questions:

Spiritual Respiration

1. What is the primary objective of Section 2 for Restorative Discipleship Instructors, and how does cultivating personal spiritual vitality enhance their ability to minister to traumatized individuals?
2. Explain the concept of “spiritual respiration” as described in the text. How does the Hebrew word *awgab* (meaning “to breathe after” or “to long for”) shape the instructor’s approach to loving God and others?
3. Discuss how the scriptures Mark 12:29-31 and Deuteronomy 6:4-5 guide instructors in modeling a healthy inner life. Why is this inner life critical for effective ministry?
4. Why is it essential for instructors to assess and address their own unresolved trauma? Provide an example of how unhealed trauma might negatively impact their ability to guide disciples.
5. Describe the two key practices of “breathing in” from God (prayer, scripture study, worship). How can an instructor incorporate these practices into their daily routine to sustain spiritual vitality?
6. Explain the significance of “breathing out” to others through acts of compassion, sharing the gospel, and being a light (Matthew 5:16). How do these works of mercy contribute to God’s prevenient grace?
7. How does an instructor’s spiritual health directly impact their ability to guide disciples toward truth and healing? Provide a specific example of how a vibrant inner life might influence a Restorative Discipleship session.
8. Reflect on the importance of avoiding projection of personal trauma onto disciples. How can an instructor use practices like journaling or seeking discipleship to address their own wounds?
9. Discuss how the church community supports an instructor’s spiritual respiration. How can an instructor encourage disciples to engage with the church to enhance their healing process?
10. In the discipleship application, why is it stated that “you cannot address others’ trauma if subject to your own unresolved wounds”? Describe a scenario where an instructor’s unresolved trauma might hinder a disciple’s healing, and suggest how they could overcome this challenge.

# Section 3: Understanding Trauma

**Objective:** Equip Restorative Discipleship Instructors to identify and categorize trauma in disciples’ lives, linking it to spiritual and emotional consequences, with God’s Word as the remedy (Psalm 107:17-20).

1. **Instructions for Restorative Discipleship Instructors:**
   1. Use Psalm 107:17-20 to frame trauma as affliction rooted in sin and lies—“Fools, because of their transgression… were afflicted… He sent His word and healed them.”
   2. Define “destructions” (Hebrew: pit, despair) as the emotional/spiritual state trauma produces—distress, hopelessness, anxiety.
   3. Categorize disciples’ experiences to tailor interventions.
2. **Trauma Categories:**
   1. **Acute Trauma:** Single events (e.g., accidents, assaults, sudden loss).
   2. **Chronic Trauma:** Prolonged exposure (e.g., abuse, war, bullying).
   3. **Historical Trauma:** Generational wounds (e.g., slavery, genocide).
   4. **Developmental Trauma:** Childhood disruptions affecting growth.
   5. **Medical Trauma:** Illness or treatment-related distress.
   6. **Moral Injury:** Violations of moral beliefs (e.g., wartime acts).
   7. **Performance Trauma:** Repeated failures eroding self-worth.
   8. **Spiritual Trauma:** Unanswered prayer, feelings God has failed.
3. **Discipleship Application:**
   1. Ask disciples to identify and describe their trauma, noting its type and impact, to prepare for uncovering associated lies.
   2. Emphasize that sinful response patterns keep trauma’s effects current, but God’s Word heals.

Understanding Trauma: A Gospel-Centered Approach to Healing

Trauma is a pervasive force, weaving its way into the fabric of human experience with devastating consequences. It is not merely an event or series of events; it is a wound that reverberates through the emotional, spiritual, and relational dimensions of life. For Restorative Discipleship Instructors, the task of guiding disciples toward healing begins with a deep understanding of trauma—its origins, its manifestations, and its remedy. The objective is clear: equip instructors to identify and categorize trauma in disciples’ lives, linking it to spiritual and emotional consequences, and pointing to God’s Word as the ultimate source of restoration, as affirmed in Psalm 107:17-20. We will now explore the framework for this understanding, detailing the instructions for instructors, the diverse categories of trauma, and the practical application in discipleship, all rooted in a biblical perspective that offers hope and transformation.

**Framing Trauma Through Scripture**

Restorative Discipleship Instructors are tasked with a foundational approach: using Psalm 107:17-20 to frame trauma as an affliction rooted in sin and lies. The passage states, “Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.” This scripture provides a lens through which trauma is not merely a random misfortune but a consequence of a fallen world, where sin—both personal and collective—opens the door to suffering. The “fools” here are not condemned but depicted as those ensnared by rebellion, whether their own or that of others, leading to affliction. For instructors, this framing shifts the narrative from victimhood to a redemptive story where God intervenes.

A key term in this passage is “destructions,” derived from the Hebrew word meaning “pit” or “despair.” Instructors must define this as the emotional and spiritual state trauma produces—distress, hopelessness, and anxiety. This is not just a fleeting sadness but a profound sinking into a pit, where the soul feels trapped and disconnected from life’s purpose. A disciple who has endured chronic abuse, for instance, might describe a persistent sense of despair, as if no escape exists. By naming this state, instructors help disciples recognize the depth of trauma’s impact, setting the stage for God’s Word to emerge as the remedy. The promise of Psalm 107:20—that God “sent His word and healed them”—underscores that healing is not a human achievement but a divine gift, accessible through scripture’s truth.

To apply this effectively, instructors are instructed to categorize disciples’ experiences, tailoring interventions to the specific nature of their trauma. This categorization is not a clinical exercise but a pastoral one, enabling a nuanced understanding that bridges the emotional and spiritual dimensions. By grounding their approach in Psalm 107, instructors offer disciples a framework that acknowledges pain’s roots while pointing to God’s redemptive power, preparing them to confront trauma’s lies with the truth that sets them free.

**Categories of Trauma: A Comprehensive View**

Trauma manifests in many forms, each with unique characteristics and consequences. Restorative Discipleship Instructors must master eight distinct categories to identify and address trauma effectively:

Acute Trauma: This arises from single, isolated incidents—car accidents, sexual assaults, or the sudden loss of a loved one. Its intensity is immediate, leaving a sharp imprint. A disciple recounting a car crash might describe lingering fear of driving, a visceral reminder of vulnerability.

Chronic Trauma: Prolonged exposure defines this category, such as ongoing domestic violence, war, or bullying. Its cumulative nature deepens the wound over time. A soldier from a war zone might carry not just memories of battle but a pervasive sense of threat that colors every interaction.

Historical Trauma: This spans generations, rooted in events like slavery, genocide, or colonization. It manifests in cultural narratives and collective identity. A descendant of enslaved peoples might wrestle with inherited shame or distrust, even without personal experience of the original trauma.

Developmental Trauma: Occurring during childhood’s critical growth phases, this disrupts emotional and cognitive development. Neglect or abuse in early years might leave a disciple with difficulty trusting others, their brain wired for survival rather than connection.

Medical Trauma: Stemming from severe illness, invasive treatments, or medical negligence, this category evokes helplessness. A cancer survivor might harbor anxiety from chemotherapy’s toll, feeling betrayed by their own body.

Moral Injury: This arises from actions or witnessing acts that violate deeply held moral beliefs, common in wartime scenarios. A veteran who killed in combat might grapple with guilt, unable to reconcile their values with their deeds.

Performance Trauma: Repeated failures—academic, professional, or personal—erode self-worth, creating a cycle of perceived inadequacy. A student who flunked out of school might believe they are doomed to fail, their identity tethered to defeat.

Spiritual Trauma: Rooted in unanswered prayers or perceived divine abandonment, this fractures faith. A disciple who prayed fervently for a loved one’s healing, only to face loss, might feel God has failed them, leading to spiritual despair.

Each category carries distinct emotional and spiritual consequences, yet all share a common thread: they plunge the soul into the “destructions” of Psalm 107—distress, hopelessness, and anxiety. Instructors must discern these categories in disciples’ stories, recognizing that a single life may bear multiple types. A woman who endured childhood neglect (developmental) and later a violent assault (acute) carries a complex burden, requiring tailored guidance. This taxonomy equips instructors to move beyond generic solutions, addressing the specific lies and wounds each trauma breeds.

**Discipleship Application: From Identification to Healing**

Understanding trauma’s categories is only the beginning; the real work lies in applying this knowledge in discipleship. Instructors are directed to engage disciples actively, asking them to describe their trauma in detail—its type, its timing, and its impact. This is not a passive recounting but a deliberate step toward uncovering the lies trauma teaches. *For example, a disciple who suffered chronic bullying might say, “I feel like I’ll never be enough,” revealing a lie of worthlessness tied to their experience. By noting the trauma’s type (chronic) and its emotional toll (insecurity), instructors prepare to address the spiritual root—perhaps a disbelief in God’s affirmation of their value.*

This process requires sensitivity and patience. Instructors must listen for clues: Does the disciple’s language reflect despair (destructions)? Do they hint at spiritual disconnection or self-condemnation? A survivor of moral injury might say, “God can’t forgive what I’ve done,” signaling both a moral wound and a spiritual lie. These insights guide the next phase—replacing lies with truth—but first, the trauma must be fully understood.

A critical insight for instructors to emphasize is that sinful tendencies keep trauma’s effects current. The “transgression and iniquities” of Psalm 107 suggest that trauma’s pain is prolonged by responses like bitterness, isolation, or self-reliance—sins that entrench the soul in its pit. A disciple who clings to anger after an assault keeps the wound alive, feeding the lie of powerlessness. Yet, this is not a point of shame but of hope. Instructors must stress that while sin sustains trauma’s grip, God’s Word heals. Psalm 107:20’s promise—“He sent His word and healed them”—offers a lifeline, delivering disciples from their destructions through scripture’s transformative power.

In practice, this means guiding disciples to specific truths. For the bullied disciple, “You are fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) counters worthlessness. For the morally injured, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1) restores peace with God. Instructors tailor these interventions, linking trauma’s categories to biblical remedies, and encourage disciples to speak these truths in faith. This application bridges understanding and healing, moving from identification to restoration.

**Conclusion: Equipping for Transformation**

Understanding trauma is the cornerstone of Restorative Discipleship, equipping instructors to guide disciples out of despair and into freedom. By framing trauma through Psalm 107:17-20, instructors root their approach in God’s redemptive narrative, identifying it as an affliction with a divine cure. Categorizing trauma into eight types—acute, chronic, historical, developmental, medical, moral, performance, and spiritual—provides a map to navigate its complexity, ensuring interventions are precise and personal. In discipleship, instructors translate this understanding into action, uncovering trauma’s lies and countering them with God’s Word, which heals the soul’s deepest wounds.

This process is not academic but profoundly spiritual, acknowledging trauma’s toll while proclaiming its defeat. As instructors equip disciples to name their pain and claim their healing, they fulfill a sacred calling: to lead others from the pit of destructions to the light of Christ’s truth. In this, trauma loses its power, and the soul finds its remedy—not in human effort, but in the Word that delivers.

# Section 3 Discussion Questions:

Understanding Trauma

1. How does Psalm 107:17-20 frame trauma as an affliction rooted in sin and lies, and why is this scriptural perspective important for Restorative Discipleship Instructors guiding disciples toward healing?
2. Explain the meaning of “destructions” (Hebrew: pit, despair) in the context of Psalm 107:20. How can instructors use this concept to help disciples recognize the emotional and spiritual states caused by trauma?
3. Discuss the importance of categorizing trauma into eight distinct types (acute, chronic, historical, developmental, medical, moral, performance, and spiritual). How does this categorization aid instructors in tailoring interventions for disciples?
4. Describe the characteristics of acute trauma and chronic trauma. Provide an example of how an instructor might help a disciple distinguish between these two types in their own life experiences.
5. What is historical trauma, and how might it manifest in a disciple’s life? How can instructors use scripture to address the inherited wounds associated with this type of trauma?
6. Explain the concept of developmental trauma and its impact on a disciple’s emotional and cognitive growth. How can instructors use Psalm 139:14 to counter the lies this trauma produces?
7. Discuss the nature of moral injury and its spiritual consequences. How might an instructor guide a disciple struggling with guilt from a moral injury to find peace through Romans 8:1?
8. Why does the text emphasize that sinful response patterns (e.g., bitterness, isolation) keep trauma’s effects current? Provide an example of how an instructor might help a disciple identify and address such a pattern using scripture.
9. In the Discipleship Application, why is it critical to ask disciples to identify and describe their trauma’s type and impact? How does this process prepare them for uncovering associated lies?
10. Reflect on the statement, “God’s Word heals” (Psalm 107:20). How can instructors practically apply this principle in discipleship to help people move from the despair of trauma to the hope of restoration?

# Section 4: Find the Trauma, Find the Lie

**Objective:** Help Restorative Discipleship Instructors guide disciples to pinpoint lies trauma has taught them and replace them with gospel truth (John 8:24; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

1. **Instructions for Restorative Discipleship Instructors:**
   1. Explain that trauma teaches lies that bind disciples to bondage, blinding them to the gospel (John 8:24; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).
   2. Use prayer and remembrance to revisit traumatic moments, equipping disciples to reject lies (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).
   3. List common lies and their effects, helping disciples identify which resonate with their experience.
2. **Examples of Trauma-Induced Lies:**
   1. **Poverty:** “I can’t be productive or provide.”
   2. **Sickness:** “I’m too broken to thrive.”
   3. **Abuse (Physical/Sexual):** “I’m powerless, unworthy, dirty, vulnerable; my body is for others’ indulgence.”
   4. **Rejection/Abandonment:** “I’m unlovable, alone; something’s wrong with me.”
   5. **Failure (Academic/Moral/Spiritual):** “I’ll never succeed; I’m defective; God is angry; I can’t be forgiven.”
   6. **Offense/Embarrassment:** “I’m morally superior; I have less value; I should always be second-guessed.”
   7. **Violence:** “I deserve this; I’m not strong enough; no one will protect me.”
   8. **Spiritual Abuse:** “Church/leaders can’t be trusted; I must fight my demons alone.”
   9. **Social Stigma:** “They are better than me.”
3. **Purpose of Lies:**
   1. Blind disciples to the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).
   2. Undermine God’s Word’s authority.
   3. Cause death in sin (John 8:24).
4. **Discipleship Application:**
   1. Ask: “What did this trauma teach you about God, yourself, or others?” Record responses to address later.
   2. Note how lies empower bondage, causing disciples to “fight to keep their demons.”

Find the Trauma, Find the Lie:

Unmasking the Deceptive Power of Trauma

Trauma is more than a wound; *it is a teacher*. It does not merely inflict pain or disrupt lives—it imparts lessons in the form of lies that take root in the human soul. These lies, insidious and pervasive, shape how individuals perceive themselves, others, and God, steering them away from truth and into bondage. **The journey of healing, therefore, necessitates a critical task: finding the trauma and uncovering the lie it teaches.** By understanding this dynamic, we can confront the deception head-on, armed with the truth of the gospel, and reclaim the freedom that trauma seeks to steal.

**The Mechanism of Trauma’s Deception**

At its core, *trauma is designed to teach a lie that governs one’s life*. Scripture tells us that we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), and in several instances, it tells us that the just shall live by faith, (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38). This means that God’s expectation is that we are governed by faith in God, rather than the lies that are taught us by trauma. Trauma opens a door—a vulnerability—through which individuals may willfully reject God’s truth in favor of the falsehood trauma presents. Trauma is designed to be a *faith killer*. This is not a passive process; trauma actively engages the human will, offering a distorted lens through which reality is viewed. For instance, a child abandoned by a parent may not merely feel loss but internalize the lie that they are inherently unworthy of love. This lie, once believed, becomes a cornerstone of their identity, influencing decisions, relationships, and even their spiritual life.

The emotional residue of trauma amplifies this deception. Traumatic emotions—fear, shame, anger—linger long after the event, resurfacing in moments of weakness to rekindle the pain. A survivor of physical abuse might feel a surge of helplessness years later when faced with conflict, as if the battle never ended. These emotions act as a megaphone for the lie, causing individuals to reexperience the trauma in varying degrees, even decades removed from the original incident. Yet, there is hope in this cycle. Through prayer and intentional remembrance, one can revisit these moments not as a victim, but as a warrior equipped with spiritual tools. As 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 instructs, we can “cast down imaginations and every lie that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,” bringing every thought into obedience to Christ. This process transforms trauma from a dictator into a defeated foe, exposing its lies to the light of truth.

**The Specific Lies Trauma Teaches**

What, then, are the specific lies trauma imparts? These falsehoods are as varied as the experiences themselves, yet they share a common thread: they bind individuals to their pain, causing them to cling to bondage rather than embrace freedom. The lie, once believed, becomes a shield—a perverse comfort—that people fight to preserve, as if relinquishing it means losing a part of themselves. In essence, they “fight to keep their demons,” identifying more with the trauma’s narrative than with God’s redemptive truth.

Consider the trauma of poverty: it whispers, “You are unable to be productive in a way that financially benefits you and others.” This lie convinces individuals that their worth is tied to their bank account, stifling ambition and generosity. Similarly, the trauma of sickness declares, “You are disabled and cannot thrive in life like other people,” fostering a sense of permanent limitation. Physical abuse teaches, “You still live in the battle and cannot win,” trapping survivors in a mindset of perpetual defeat. Sexual abuse, with its deep violation, instills lies like, “I am dirty, vulnerable, promiscuous, and my body’s purpose is for the indulgence of others,” eroding self-worth and autonomy.

Other traumas spawn equally destructive lies. Rejection or abandonment might convince someone, “Something is wrong with me; those who abandoned me were right to do so; I am isolated and on my own.” Academic failure could lead to, “I’m not smart enough; I have an invisible disadvantage,” undermining confidence and potential. Spiritual abuse, a betrayal of trust in sacred spaces, may plant the seeds of, “I can’t find answers in church; Christian leaders cannot be trusted; I must fight my demons alone.” Each lie, tailored to the trauma, distorts the truth about God, others, and oneself, creating a prison of the mind and spirit.

The list is extensive: the trauma of offense breeds moral superiority—“They have to change for me to get better”—while embarrassment whispers, “I should be second-guessed; I have less value.” Violence convinces its victims, “I deserve this; I’m not strong enough; no one will protect me,” and moral failure insists, “God is angry at me; I cannot be forgiven.” Social stigma reinforces, “They are better than me,” perpetuating inferiority. These lies are not mere thoughts; they are chains that bind individuals to their past, preventing them from stepping into the freedom God offers.

**The Purpose of Trauma’s Lies**

What do these trauma-induced lies seek to accomplish? Their purpose is threefold, each aim a calculated strike against the soul’s liberation. First, they are designed to blind individuals to the gospel. As 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 warns, “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ… should shine on them.” The adversary uses trauma’s lies to obscure the good news of Christ’s victory, keeping people in darkness rather than light. A person convinced they are unforgivable, for example, struggles to accept the gospel’s promise of redemption, effectively blinded to its truth.

Second, these lies undermine the ability and authority of God’s Word. When trauma teaches that one is powerless or unworthy, scripture’s assurances—“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13) or “You are fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14)—lose their potency. The lie erects a barrier between the individual and the transformative power of God’s truth, rendering the Word ineffective in their perception. This erosion of trust in scripture’s authority keeps the soul tethered to despair rather than lifted by hope.

Ultimately, the lies aim to cause a person to “die in their sins,” as Jesus warns in John 8:24: “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” This is the final, devastating goal—to sever the connection between the individual and Christ, the only source of eternal life. By fostering disbelief in God’s love, power, or forgiveness, *trauma’s lies lead to spiritual death, a state where sin reigns unchallenged*. The person who believes they are beyond redemption or unworthy of God’s grace fulfills the lie’s prophecy, remaining ensnared in their brokenness.

**Reclaiming Truth, Breaking Bondage**

The path to freedom lies in exposing and dismantling these lies. Finding the trauma means identifying its emotional and spiritual fingerprints—those moments where pain taught a lesson contrary to God’s truth. Finding the lie means naming it, whether it’s “I am unlovable,” “I cannot win,” or “God has abandoned me.” Once named, the lie can be confronted with the gospel’s power, which declares that Christ’s death and resurrection shatter every falsehood. Through prayer, remembrance, and the application of scripture, individuals can reject the lies trauma teaches, replacing them with the truth that sets them free.

Trauma may be a harsh teacher, but it is not the final authority. By uncovering its lies and rooting ourselves in the gospel, we disarm its power to govern our lives. The process is neither quick nor easy, but it is possible. As we cast down every imagination and bring every thought into obedience to Christ, we move from bondage to liberty, from lies to truth, and from death to life. In this journey, the trauma becomes not a dictator, but a defeated foe, overcome by the One who is the way, the truth, and the life.

# Section 4 Discussion Questions:

Find the Trauma, Find the Lie

1. How does Section 4 describe the relationship between trauma and lies, and why is it critical for Restorative Discipleship Instructors to help disciples identify these lies to achieve freedom?
2. Explain how John 8:24 and 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 frame the spiritual consequences of trauma-induced lies. How can instructors use these scriptures to illustrate the importance of confronting lies with gospel truth?
3. Discuss the role of prayer and remembrance in revisiting traumatic moments, as outlined in the instructions. How can instructors guide disciples to use 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 to reject lies during this process?
4. Choose one example of a trauma-induced lie (e.g., from poverty, abuse, or rejection) and describe its emotional and spiritual effects on a disciple. How might an instructor help the disciple replace this lie with a specific scriptural truth?
5. Why does the text suggest that disciples “fight to keep their demons” when they believe trauma’s lies? Provide an example of how a disciple might cling to a lie and how an instructor can address this in discipleship.
6. Analyze the threefold purpose of trauma’s lies (blinding to the gospel, undermining God’s Word, causing death in sin). How do these purposes align with the adversary’s strategy to keep disciples in bondage?
7. Reflect on the lie associated with spiritual abuse: “Church/leaders can’t be trusted; I must fight my demons alone.” How can instructors use scripture to rebuild a disciple’s trust in the church community and God’s presence?
8. In the Discipleship Application, why is the question “What did this trauma teach you about God, yourself, or others?” significant? How can instructors use the responses to guide disciples toward healing?
9. Discuss how trauma’s lies distort a disciple’s perception of God, themselves, and others. Provide an example of a lie from the text (e.g., from failure or violence) and suggest a gospel-centered approach to counter it.
10. How does the process of finding the trauma and finding the lie transform a disciple’s relationship with their pain? Describe how an instructor can help a disciple move from viewing trauma as a dictator to seeing it as a defeated foe through the gospel.

# Section 5: The Three Loves

**Objective:** Guide Restorative Discipleship Instructors to help disciples heal their capacity to love God, themselves, and others, per the greatest commandment (Mark 12:29-31).

1. **Instructions for Restorative Discipleship Instructors:**
   1. Use Colossians to address three core problems trauma creates:
      1. **The God Problem (Colossians 1:9-22):** Restore trust in God’s strength, qualification, and deliverance.
         1. He has strengthened us (1:11).
         2. He has qualified us (1:12).
         3. He has delivered us (1:13).
      2. **The Me Problem (Colossians 2:6-3:7):** Free disciples from captivity, judgment, and performance traps.
         1. Don’t be captive (2:8).
         2. Don’t be judged (2:16).
         3. Don’t be cheated (2:18)—avoid religious performance.
      3. **The Others Problem (Colossians 3:8-17):** Help disciples stop offending and start healing others with love.
         1. Put off things that affect others (3:8).
         2. Put on traits of a reconciler, with love as the goal (3:12-15).
         3. Put in the Word of Christ (3:16-17).
   2. Clarify: Loving oneself means embracing change for God’s glory, not clinging to one’s current state (contrast with loving one’s life).
2. **Discipleship Application:**
   1. Assess which “love” is most compromised and target interventions accordingly.

The Three Loves:

Healing the Soul Through the Truth

Trauma leaves deep scars, not only on the body or mind but on the whole person — spirit, soul and body. Proverbs tells us, “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; But a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Proverbs‬

**The God Problem: Restoring Love for God**

Trauma often severs our connection to God, casting doubt on His nature and promises. The God Problem emerges when pain convinces us that God is distant, powerless, or uncaring, undermining our ability to love Him fully. Colossians 1:9-22 offers a remedy, revealing three truths that rebuild this love. First, "He has strengthened us" (Colossians 1:11). Trauma may leave us feeling weak, as if we must face life’s battles alone, but the Bible assures us that God imparts endurance and patience through His glorious might. A survivor of chronic illness, for example, might feel abandoned, yet this truth counters that lie with divine empowerment, fostering trust and affection for a God who sustains.

Second, "He has qualified us" (Colossians 1:12). Trauma often whispers that we are unworthy—perhaps due to moral failure or rejection—disqualifying us from God’s love. Yet, Colossians declares that God has made us fit to share in the inheritance of His saints. This is not based on our merit but on Christ’s work, who reconciles us to God (Colossians 1:22). For someone burdened by shame, this assurance restores confidence in God’s acceptance, rekindling love rooted in gratitude rather than fear.

Third, "He has delivered us" (Colossians 1:13). Trauma traps us in a kingdom of darkness—be it fear, despair, or bitterness—but God has rescued us, transferring us into the kingdom of His beloved Son. A victim of violence might feel perpetually unsafe, but this deliverance promises liberation from evil’s grip, inspiring a love for God as a protector and redeemer. Together, these truths dismantle the God Problem, healing the soul by affirming that God is strong, gracious, and present, worthy of our wholehearted devotion.

**The Me Problem: Healing Self-Perception**

Trauma distorts self-perception, making it difficult to love ourselves in a way that aligns with God’s design. The Me Problem arises when we become captive to lies about our identity, trapped in cycles of judgment and performance. Colossians 1:23-29 and 2:6-3:7 address this, urging us to reject three pitfalls. First, "Don’t be captive" (Colossians 2:8). Trauma often chains us to human philosophies or deceptive beliefs—perhaps that we are irreparably broken or defined by our past. A survivor of sexual abuse might believe, “I am dirty and vulnerable,” but the Holy Spirit through Paul warns against such captivity, pointing instead to Christ’s sufficiency. Loving oneself means rejecting these lies and embracing the freedom to change.

Second, "Don’t be judged" (Colossians 2:16). Trauma can leave us hypersensitive to others’ opinions or our own harsh self-criticism, as if our worth hinges on external standards. Someone who faced academic failure might internalize, “I’m not smart enough,” living under constant scrutiny. Yet, Colossians frees us from such judgment, affirming that Christ’s work, not human rules, defines us. This liberation encourages a love for self that seeks growth, not perfection.

Third, "Don’t be cheated" (Colossians 2:18). Trauma often lures us into religious performance—striving to earn God’s favor through rituals or self-punishment. This cheats us of the fullness of Christ’s grace, wrapping us in a false identity. Loving oneself, in contrast, means resting in Christ’s completed work and pursuing transformation for His glory, not out of guilt. For instance, a person wrestling with spiritual failure might stop striving to appease an angry God and instead accept forgiveness, fostering a healthy self-love that draws them closer to Him. By resolving the Me Problem, God heals the soul, enabling a love for self that embraces change rather than clings to a stagnant life.

**The Others Problem: Renewing Love for Others**

Finally, trauma impairs our capacity to love others, turning us into offenders rather than healers. The Others Problem manifests when pain fuels behaviors that harm relationships, preventing us from fulfilling the second part of the greatest commandment. Colossians 3:8-17 provides a roadmap to restoration through three steps. First, *put off* things that affect others (Colossians 3:8). Trauma often breeds anger, slander, or malice—responses that wound those around us. A person traumatized by offense might adopt moral superiority, insisting, “They must change for me to heal.” Paul calls us to shed these, turning from being an offender to becoming a source of peace. This shift begins to heal the soul by aligning it with love’s outward focus.

Second, *put on* the things that display godly virtue. (Colossians 3:12-15). Compassion, kindness, humility, and patience—crowned by love—are the traits of a healed soul. Trauma may isolate us, as with abandonment’s lie, “I am on my own,” but these virtues draw us into community. Love becomes the ultimate goal, binding all actions in perfect harmony (Colossians 3:14). For someone scarred by violence, choosing forgiveness over bitterness transforms them into a reconciler, restoring their ability to love others as God intends.

Third, *put in* the Word of Christ (Colossians 3:16-17). The gospel dwelling richly within us—through teaching, singing, and gratitude—equips us to act in Christ’s name. Trauma might convince us, as with social stigma, that “they are better than me,” fostering envy or withdrawal. But immersing ourselves in God’s Word renews our perspective, enabling us to serve others with joy. This step completes the healing of the Others Problem, turning a soul once crippled by pain into a conduit of love, reflecting Christ’s character.

**A Soul Restored to Love**

We must recognize that trauma compromises the three loves essential to a healthy soul—love for God, self, and others—and its provision of a gospel-centered solution. The God Problem is resolved as we embrace His strength, qualification, and deliverance, reigniting our love for Him. The Me Problem fades as we reject captivity, judgment, and performance, learning to love ourselves through transformative faith. The Others Problem dissolves as we put off offense, put on healing traits, and put in Christ’s Word, restoring our love for those around us.

This restoration hinges on a crucial distinction: loving oneself is not loving one’s life. To love one’s life is to cling to the status quo, resisting change even when it perpetuates bondage. To love oneself, however, is to pursue growth, to align with God’s sanctifying work, and to draw nearer to Him. Trauma tempts us to love our broken lives, but Truth Over Trauma calls us to love ourselves enough to heal. Through Colossians’ wisdom, we see that the gospel does not merely patch wounds—it rebuilds the soul, enabling us to fulfill the greatest commandment. In this triune love, we find not just survival, but a flourishing life, whole and free.

# Section 5 Discussion Questions:

The Three Loves

1. How does Section 5 use the greatest commandment (Mark 12:29-31) to frame the healing process, and why is restoring the three loves (God, self, others) essential for overcoming trauma’s impact on the soul?
2. Explain the God Problem as outlined in Colossians 1:9-22. How can instructors use the truths that God has strengthened, qualified, and delivered us to help a disciple rebuild trust and love for God?
3. Discuss the Me Problem described in Colossians 2:6-3:7. How do the warnings against captivity, judgment, and being cheated by religious performance help disciples heal their self-perception and foster a healthy love for themselves?
4. Describe the Others Problem according to Colossians 3:8-17. How can instructors guide a disciple to move from offending others to becoming a reconciler through putting off harmful behaviors and putting on godly virtues?
5. Why does the text distinguish between loving oneself and loving one’s life? Provide an example of how a disciple might cling to their current state due to trauma and how an instructor can encourage transformative self-love.
6. Reflect on how trauma disrupts the ability to love God, using an example from the God Problem (e.g., a survivor of violence feeling unsafe). How can instructors apply Colossians 1:13 to restore this love?
7. Choose one lie associated with the Me Problem (e.g., “I’m broken” from abuse or “I’m not smart enough” from failure). How can instructors use Colossians 2:8 or 2:16 to help a disciple reject this lie and embrace a love for self that seeks God’s glory?
8. In the context of the Others Problem, why is love described as the ultimate goal (Colossians 3:14)? How can instructors help a disciple scarred by rejection put on traits like compassion and forgiveness to heal relationships?
9. In the Discipleship Application, why is it important to assess which of the three loves is most compromised? Describe how an instructor might tailor interventions for a disciple struggling primarily with loving others due to social stigma.
   * 1. • 10. How does the immersion in the Word of Christ (Colossians 3:16-17) facilitate healing across all three loves? Provide an example of how an instructor might encourage a disciple to use scripture to restore their capacity to love God, self, and others.

# Section 6: The Pathway of Sanctification

I. Introduction

1. Main Idea: Healing from trauma is a deep journey of sanctification, not just recovery.
2. Goal: Instructors guide disciples toward sanctification, not self-actualization (John 17:19), focusing on God’s love, not self-discovery.
3. Church’s Role: God’s chosen community for sanctification (Ephesians 4:11-16), equipping and uniting believers.
4. Framework: Wesley’s five-stage Scripture Way of Salvation shows how God transforms us in the church.
5. Focus: Explores the church’s role, details Wesley’s stages (especially entire sanctification), and gives discipleship tips.

II. Guidance for Instructors

1. Purpose: Church helps shift healing from “best self” to “holy for God and others.”
2. Key Difference: Sanctification (serving God and others) vs. self-actualization (self-focus), vital in today’s culture.
3. Definition: God’s love through us, started and sustained in the church (Ephesians 4:11-12).
4. Bible Basis:
   1. 1 Peter 1:15-16: Be holy like God.
   2. Romans 12:1-2: Transform for service.
   3. 2 Corinthians 5:17: New identity in Christ.

III. Wesley’s Five Stages of Salvation

1. Overview: Five steps with the church as the key setting for healing and growth.
2. 1. Prevenient Grace:
   1. God’s first grace awakens all to Him (John 6:44).
   2. Seen in church acts like kind words or hymns, sparking hope (e.g., for a rejected disciple).
3. 2. Justification:
   1. Salvation when faith forgives sin (Romans 5:1).
   2. Church shares the gospel, easing guilt (e.g., for moral injury).
4. 3. Sanctification:
   1. Growing in holiness with church help (1 Thessalonians 4:3).
   2. Small groups aid in shedding bitterness (e.g., from abuse).
5. 4. Entire Sanctification:
   1. Love rules the heart, free from sin’s grip (1 John 4:18).
   2. Church nurtures this through prayer and service (e.g., a worthless-feeling disciple leads ministry).
6. 5. Glorification:
   1. Final transformation at death or Christ’s return (Romans 8:30; Revelation 21:4).
   2. Church offers hope through worship (e.g., for chronic illness).
7. Church’s Necessity: Guides away from self-focus to God’s plan (Ephesians 4:16).

IV. Why the Church Matters

1. Role: Heart of sanctification, turning trauma into testimony.
2. Support: Pastors equip and unify (Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:25).
3. Action: Go to church—it’s where healing grows with leaders’ help.
4. Example: Church prayer undoes “I’m unlovable” lie.

V. Discipleship Tips

1. Method: Use church to reframe healing as sanctification.
   1. Prevenient Grace: Spot God’s nudge in church.
   2. Justification: Accept forgiveness via gospel.
   3. Sanctification: Grow with church practices.
   4. Entire Sanctification: Love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).
   5. Glorification: Worship gives hope (Revelation 21:4).
2. Question: “How does your healing bless the church?”

VI. Conclusion

1. Summary: Church drives sanctification, healing trauma into holiness.
2. Key Points: Wesley’s stages, led by church, counter self-actualization; entire sanctification transforms.
3. Call: Join church for lasting healing and purpose.

The Pathway of Sanctification:

The Church as the Heart of Healing

Healing from trauma is a deeply transformative journey, one that moves far beyond simple recovery and invites a profound reshaping of the soul through sanctification. Because a person has been taught so many lies they have to in a sense, be won to Christ— even if they are already saved. For Restorative Discipleship Instructors, the mission is resolute: to shepherd disciples toward sanctification—not self-actualization—as the ultimate purpose of healing, a calling rooted in the powerful words of John 17:19.

Maslow’s self-actualization is the top level of his pyramid of human needs, which he came up with in 1943 to explain what drives people. It’s all about reaching your best self—becoming who you’re meant to be—after basics like food, safety, love, and feeling good about yourself are covered. Think of it as wanting to grow, be creative, and live with purpose, not just to get by or impress others. It’s about being real, independent, and chasing what matters to you, using your own special gifts once life’s essentials are handled.

This path turns the focus away from an inward pursuit of “finding ourselves” and toward an outward embodiment of God’s self-giving love, echoing Christ’s prayer: “For their sakes, I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.” At the heart of this sacred process stands the church, God’s appointed community for fostering sanctification, as vividly described in Ephesians 4:11-16. In this divine design, the church equips believers for ministry, strengthens the body of Christ, and cultivates unity and maturity through the interplay of truth and love. Here, instructors light the way, revealing how God’s holiness molds us for love and service within the nurturing embrace of a faith community. Pulling from John Wesleys Scripture Way of Salvation, we delve into the church’s indispensable role in sanctification, provides an in-depth exploration of a five-stage framework—with special attention to entire sanctification—and offers practical Discipleship Applications to guide disciples into a life of sanctification.

**Instructions for Restorative Discipleship Instructors**

The first duty of instructors is to draw a clear line between sanctification and self-actualization, a distinction that carries immense weight in a culture enamored with self-discovery. Trauma survivors might naturally see healing as a solitary mission to redefine their identity apart from God, but Jesus’ declaration in John 17:19 offers a higher vision: “For their sakes, I sanctify Myself, that they might be sanctified by the truth.” Sanctification is not a quest for self-fulfillment; it is the act of being set apart by God’s truth for His purposes—to love and serve others in the same spirit as Christ. Instructors must underscore that this is God’s self-giving love flowing through us, a transformative process He initiates and sustains within the church. Ephesians 4:11-12 supports this truth: “He gave some to be… pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints… for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The church, as a living faith community, becomes the fertile ground where this transformation takes root, reframing healing for a disciple wounded by rejection from a self-centered “becoming my best self” to a God-honoring “being holy for God’s glory and others’ good.”

Scripture lays the unshakable foundation for this journey. Instructors should turn to passages like 1 Peter 1:15-16—“Be holy, for I am holy”—to illustrate that God’s holiness is the standard, summoning us to reflect His character within the church’s supportive embrace. Romans 12:1-2 calls us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, transformed by the renewing of our minds, a process enriched by the church’s communal worship and teaching. For a disciple burdened by shame, 2 Corinthians 5:17—“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation”—declares that God’s sanctifying work, magnified by the church’s encouragement, replaces old, broken identities with His righteousness. These scriptures affirm sanctification as a divine act, nurtured within the church, equipping us to love God and others with greater depth and authenticity.

Wesley’s Scripture Way of Salvation provides a comprehensive five-stage roadmap, with the church serving as the vital context for each step. Instructors must present these stages with clarity and depth, rooting disciples in a biblical understanding of how God heals and perfects:

**Prevenient Grace:** This is God’s initiating grace, a universal gift poured out to all humanity before any personal response is given. John Wesley taught that it stirs the soul, awakening us to our deep need for God and gently softening even the most hardened hearts. It is the quiet, persistent whisper of the Holy Spirit, often first experienced through the church’s outreach—perhaps a compassionate conversation with a fellow believer, the melody of a stirring hymn that lingers in the mind, or a welcoming prayer offered in a moment of vulnerability. John 6:44 captures this beautifully: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” For a disciple numbed by chronic trauma, prevenient grace might appear as a faint flicker of hope during a church service, where a kind word from a pew neighbor pierces through their layers of despair. Imagine someone who has carried the weight of rejection for years, believing “I’m unlovable,” yet a simple invitation to join a small group on a Sunday morning plants a seed—a subtle, almost imperceptible sense that healing might be within reach. This grace is not a forceful push; it’s a tender nudge, often channeled through the church’s love, drawing the wounded toward God’s radiant light. It could manifest in the innocent smile of a child during a service, a pastor’s sermon on God’s unfailing care, or the warmth of a handshake that says, “You belong here,” quietly thawing a frozen spirit and preparing it for the journey ahead.

**Justification:** This stage marks the pivotal moment of salvation, where faith in Christ’s atonement washes away the stain of sin. Wesley described it as a forensic act—God declaring us righteous through Christ’s sacrifice, as Romans 5:1 affirms: “Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God.” The church plays a crucial role here, proclaiming the gospel with clarity and warmth, creating a sacred space where this truth takes deep root. For a disciple wrestling with guilt from moral injury—perhaps a wartime act they cannot forgive themselves for—the church’s message of Christ’s cross brings relief like a balm to a festering wound. Picture them seated in a pew, hearing a pastor proclaim, “Your sins are forgiven,” their words bolstered by a congregation lifting their voices in songs of redemption. This is not a solitary revelation; it’s a communal encounter, where the church’s witness—through heartfelt sermons, earnest prayers, and shared testimonies—ushers in a peace that surpasses understanding. A fellow believer might sit beside them, sharing their own story of justification, sparking a flame of faith in the disciple’s heart and igniting a love for God as they realize they are no longer condemned. The church’s role is to cradle this sacred moment, guiding the disciple into a renewed standing with God, their soul lifted by the collective faith that surrounds them like a protective embrace.

**Sanctification:** Following justification, sanctification is the ongoing process of growing in holiness, a journey that thrives within the church’s nurturing environment. Wesley saw it as God’s grace actively working within us to purify our hearts and actions, as 1 Thessalonians 4:3 states: “This is the will of God, your sanctification.” For a disciple scarred by abuse, this might mean shedding layers of bitterness through the church’s accountability—a small group gathering weekly to pray with them, gently encouraging forgiveness over resentment. The church becomes a greenhouse for this growth, offering sermons that challenge the spirit, Bible studies that deepen understanding, and relationships that model holiness in tangible ways. Imagine a disciple who once lashed out in anger due to past trauma; through the church’s patient guidance—perhaps a mentor’s gentle correction during a coffee chat or a worship song’s soothing truth that calms their restless heart—they begin to soften, their capacity to love others expanding like a river finding new paths. This stage is not a hurried sprint; it’s a gradual unfolding, where the church’s communal life—its shared meals, heartfelt prayers, and acts of service—shapes the disciple into Christ’s likeness, step by step, as they learn to reflect God’s love in their daily actions and interactions.

**Entire Sanctification:** Wesley’s distinctive and profound contribution, entire sanctification is a state where love for God and neighbor fully governs the heart, free from sin’s oppressive dominance. Rooted in 1 John 4:18—“Perfect love casts out fear”—it represents a maturity where trauma’s lingering fears lose their grip, replaced by a heart overflowing with divine love. This is not about achieving sinless perfection in an absolute sense but embracing a transformative wholeness where selfish impulses are overshadowed by an all-consuming devotion to God and others. In the church, this might look like a disciple who once felt worthless due to rejection now leading a ministry, their life wholly devoted to God’s glory. Picture them standing before a congregation, sharing how years of communal prayer, scripture study, and acts of service—perhaps feeding the hungry alongside fellow believers—melted their fears of abandonment into unshakable trust. The church nurtures this through its sacred rhythms: a Bible study unpacking the power of love, a pastor’s encouragement to surrender fully during a sermon, a worship service where God’s presence fills the room like a warm embrace. For a survivor of acute trauma, such as a sudden loss, entire sanctification might mean their once-paralyzing dread of further pain gives way to a bold, selfless compassion, serving others with a love so pure it mirrors Christ’s sacrifice. This stage, rare and precious, is the church’s gift—a community where love is perfected, healing the soul completely and setting it ablaze with purpose.

**Glorification:** The final stage, glorification, arrives at death or Christ’s return, when we are fully conformed to His image, as Romans 8:30 promises. Wesley viewed it as the culmination of sanctification, where all trauma’s effects are erased in eternal communion with God. The church’s role here is to sustain hope, its worship resounding with Revelation 21:4: “He will wipe away every tear.” For a disciple enduring ongoing pain—perhaps the relentless burden of chronic illness—this stage offers a horizon of wholeness, reinforced by the church’s songs of eternity and prayers for strength that rise like incense. Envision a congregation gathered, lifting their voices in praise of a future without sorrow, their unity offering a foretaste of glory. A disciple might sit through a service, tears falling as they hear of heaven’s promise, finding the courage to press on through the church’s steadfast support. The church becomes a beacon, pointing beyond earthly struggles to a day when every wound is healed, every fear vanquished, its communal faith holding disciples steady until they behold Christ face-to-face in radiant splendor.

The church is indispensable, countering self-actualization’s inward tilt with sanctification’s Godward and outward trajectory, as Ephesians 4:16 illustrates: “The whole body… causes growth… for the edifying of itself in love.”

**The Church’s Role in Sanctification**

The church is not merely a backdrop but the vibrant pulse of sanctification, a community where God’s grace transforms trauma into a powerful testimony. Ephesians 4:11-16 casts pastors and teachers as shepherds, equipping saints for service and fostering unity in faith—a unity that is foundational for healing. Hebrews 10:25 urges, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” emphasizing that sanctification flourishes in gathered faith, not in isolation. People should go to church; it’s where sanctification takes root, supported by spiritual leaders whose service reflects Christ’s love. Neglecting this might stem from brokenness—a refusal to trust born of past hurts—but engaging in the church restores the soul. A disciple wrestling with the lie “I’m unlovable” might find that falsehood unravel as a congregation prays Psalm 139:14 over them, their unity embodying God’s sanctifying work. In a healthy church, entire sanctification becomes a lived reality—disciples grow into a love so complete that trauma’s fears lose their hold, their lives a testament to the grace cultivated in community. Ask yourself: *Am I allowing the church to shape my sanctification, or am I holding back from its transformative embrace?*

**Discipleship Application: Sanctification in the Church**

In discipleship sessions, instructors emphasize the church to reframe healing as sanctification, deepening disciples’ connection to God and others. Beginning with prevenient grace, they might ask, “Where has God drawn you through the church, even in pain?” A disciple hurt by unanswered prayers could recall a hymn that stirred hope, nudging them toward justification through the church’s gospel witness. As sanctification progresses, instructors encourage church practices—prayer, scripture study, acts of service—to transform a disciple burdened by failure, guiding them with Romans 12:2 to pursue God’s will over worldly success.

For entire sanctification, the church serves as a crucible of transformation. Instructors might ask, “How can the church help you let God’s perfect love cast out fear?” (1 John 4:18). A survivor of loss might join a ministry team, their fears dissolving as love governs their heart, bolstered by the prayers of their church family. The hope of glorification—Revelation 21:4—radiates through worship, assuring disciples of ultimate restoration. The church stands in stark contrast to self-actualization’s fleeting validation, offering sanctification’s enduring purpose, and instructors might pose, “How is God using your healing to bless this community?” A healed disciple might mentor others, their sanctified love reflecting Christ’s sacrifice in tangible ways.

**Conclusion: The Church as the Home of Sanctification**

The church is the beating heart of sanctification, guiding disciples beyond trauma’s wounds into a life of holiness. Instructors make clear that sanctification is God’s love working through us, using scripture and Wesley’s stages—prevenient grace, justification, sanctification, entire sanctification, and glorification—to counter self-actualization’s shallow self-centeredness. Entire sanctification, nurtured by the church, offers a life filled with love, free from sin’s dominance, turning pain into a powerful purpose. People should go to church; it’s where this sacred journey thrives, sustained by leaders and the collective strength of community. Through the church’s embrace, healing becomes a living testimony of God’s sanctifying love, a transformation that endures for eternity.

# Section 6 Discussion Questions:

The Pathway of Sanctification

1. What is the primary objective of Section 6 for Restorative Discipleship Instructors, and how does framing healing as sanctification differ from a purely emotional recovery approach?
2. Explain how the scriptures Romans 12:1-2, John 17:19, Ephesians 4:11-16, and 1 Peter 1:15-16 anchor the concept of sanctification. How can instructors use these to guide disciples toward holiness?
3. Describe Wesley’s five stages of salvation (Prevenient Grace, Justification, Sanctification, Entire Sanctification, Glorification). How do these stages provide a roadmap for healing trauma within the church?
4. Discuss the distinction between sanctification and self-actualization as presented in the text. Why is sanctification’s Godward and outward focus critical for disciples overcoming trauma?
5. How does Prevenient Grace manifest in a disciple’s life, particularly for someone with chronic trauma? Provide an example of how an instructor might help a disciple recognize this grace in a church setting.
6. Reflect on the role of the church in supporting Justification, as described in the text. How can instructors use Romans 5:1 to help a disciple with moral injury find peace with God through faith?
7. Explain the ongoing nature of Sanctification in Wesley’s framework. How can instructors encourage church practices like prayer and accountability to help a disciple scarred by abuse grow in holiness?
8. What is Entire Sanctification, and how does the church nurture this state of perfect love (1 John 4:18)? Describe how an instructor might guide a disciple feeling worthless to embrace this transformative love.
9. Discuss the hope of Glorification and its significance for disciples enduring ongoing pain, such as chronic illness. How can the church’s worship and prayers, echoing Revelation 21:4, sustain this hope?
10. In the Discipleship Application, why is it important to ask questions like “How can the church help you let God’s perfect love cast out fear?” How can instructors use such questions to deepen a disciple’s connection to the church and sanctification process?

# Section 7 - Preparation and Stabilization for the Process of Healing

1. Introduction to the Role of Restorative Discipleship (RD) Instructors
   1. Sacred calling to guide God’s people toward healing and restoration
   2. Reliance on the Holy Spirit, Scripture (Psalm 107:20), and prayer
   3. Goal: Create a trauma-informed, supportive environment for participants
2. Instructor Responsibilities
3. Cultivate inner life through daily prayer and Scripture (Ephesians 3:16, Psalm 23:1-2)
4. Practice trauma-informed ministry by discerning needs and pacing sessions slowly
5. Foster community by encouraging church involvement and peer support
6. Model spiritual disciplines (prayer, worship, Scripture meditation)
7. Introducing the Session
   1. Set a compassionate tone with Psalm 107:20
   2. Explain the purpose: Prepare participants for healing by building trust in God
   3. Assure gentle guidance and encourage openness
   4. Teaching Participants to Find Safety in God
   5. Use Scriptures like Psalm 23:1-2, Psalm 46:1, and Psalm 91:1-2
   6. Guide participants to create a safe space through prayer and recitation
   7. Monitor for distress and offer one-on-one support as needed
8. Anchoring Participants in God’s Word
   1. Ground thoughts in Scriptures like Psalm 46:10, Psalm 34:18, and Lamentations 3:22-23
   2. Lead grounding exercises with vocal declarations (e.g., “God is near me”)
   3. Provide handouts with key verses for daily use
9. Empowering Participants to Take Authority Over Their Thoughts
   1. Teach authority over thoughts using 2 Corinthians 10:4-5
   2. Demonstrate rejecting lies and replacing them with Scripture (e.g., Psalm 139:14)
   3. Facilitate group activities and assign daily tasks to build accountability
10. Comforting the Soul Through Worship and Prayer
    1. Guide participants to rest in God’s presence (Matthew 11:28, Psalm 27:1, John 14:26)
    2. Lead worship activities (e.g., singing Psalm 27:1) and model prayers
    3. Encourage daily worship as a spiritual discipline
11. Shepherding with Wisdom and Gentleness
    1. Follow Jesus’ example of shepherding (John 21:15-17)
    2. Study Scripture, recognize distress signs, and pause sessions to pray
    3. Prioritize participants’ well-being over session progress
12. Encouraging Participants to Step in Faith
    1. Build confidence with Scriptures like Deuteronomy 31:8 and John 16:13
    2. Share stories of God’s faithfulness and encourage daily prayer/Bible reading
    3. Pace the conviction phase carefully and suggest journaling answered prayers
13. Concluding with God’s Peace
14. Reinforce God’s promise of peace (John 16:33)
15. Summarize session, emphasizing God’s Word, presence, and community
16. Lead closing prayer and follow up with distressed participants
17. Practical Training Steps
18. Prepare spiritually with prayer and Scripture (Psalm 23:1-2)
19. Create a calm, distraction-free environment
20. Use group activities (prayer, hymns, Scripture recitation)
21. Monitor progress discreetly and adjust pacing
22. Collaborate with church leaders when needed

Preparation and Stabilization for the Process of Healing

As Restorative Discipleship (RD) instructors, you are entrusted with a sacred calling to guide God’s people along the path of healing and restoration. Your role is to shepherd participants with wisdom, compassion, and reliance on the Holy Spirit, equipping them to prepare their hearts for conviction. The Psalmist declares in Psalm 107:20 , “He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions,” revealing the power of God’s Word as the cornerstone of this ministry. This chapter provides guidance for leading disciples through the preparatory phase of healing, fostering a trauma-informed, supportive environment rooted in Scripture, prayer, and the church community. Approach this task with humility, seeking the strength of the Holy Spirit, as Ephesians 3:16 urges: “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” Your fortified inner life will empower you to minister effectively to those wounded by trauma.

Your mission is to create a safe space where participants can stabilize their emotions before engaging in the deeper work of conviction, correction and full restoration. This preparation is vital, as 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 reminds us: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” By modeling dependence on God, as Jesus did when He “withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed” (Luke 5:16, New King James Version), you will lead participants to rely on God’s Word, prayer, and the body of Christ. This chapter equips you to teach biblical principles, recognize signs of distress, and foster a community of support, particularly for those with severe trauma or dysregulation, such as histories of addiction.

**Instructor Responsibilities**

To lead effectively, you must embody the following responsibilities, grounding your ministry in God’s power and love.

First, cultivate your inner life through daily prayer and Scripture, as Ephesians 3:16 emphasizes inner strength through the Spirit. Your effectiveness depends on leading with God’s power, not personal talents, as 2 Corinthians 4:7 states: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Begin each day by praying Psalm 23:1-2 , “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters,” to focus on God’s presence.

Second, practice trauma-informed ministry by spiritually discerning participants’ needs, especially those with traumatic backgrounds. Pace sessions slowly, pause when distress arises (e.g., withdrawal or agitation), and refer to godly counsel when necessary. If a participant shows signs of overwhelm, pause and pray Psalm 91:1-2 : “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

Third, foster community by encouraging participants to engage in church life, attend services, grow as disciples, and serve among believers. Facilitate connections by pairing participants with a trusted Christian for prayer, reinforcing the body of Christ as a source of support.

Finally, model spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, and Scripture meditation to demonstrate their practical application. For example, lead a group recitation of Psalm 34:18 , “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit,” to show how Scripture anchors thoughts.

**Introducing the Session**

Begin each session by setting a clear, compassionate tone, explaining the purpose: to prepare participants for healing by building trust in God. Open with Psalm 107:20 , “He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions,” to highlight the transformative power of God’s Word. Assure participants of your gentle guidance, affirming that God meets them where they are, especially those with severe trauma, and emphasize that this is a journey, not a sprint. Encourage openness, inviting them to approach with humble hearts. This creates a welcoming environment, setting the stage for the work ahead.

**Teaching Participants to Find Safety in God**

Your first task is to teach participants to find safety in God’s protection, not in the distractions of the world. Scripture provides a powerful foundation: Psalm 23:1-2 portrays God as a caring shepherd: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” Psalm 46:1 affirms His constant presence: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” And Psalm 91:1-2 offers a promise of refuge: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

Guide participants to create a safe space by finding a quiet area and praying. Model this by leading a recitation of Psalm 23, saying, “Let’s pray Psalm 23 together to experience God’s peace as our shepherd.” Watch for signs of distress, such as withdrawal or agitation, and pause to offer one-on-one prayer if needed. For example, say, “Let’s pray Psalm 91:1-2 to find God’s refuge,” ensuring participants feel supported. For those overwhelmed, suggest declaring, “God is my shepherd,” to regain their focus. This approach helps participants experience God’s safety, preparing them for deeper healing.

**Anchoring Participants in God’s Word**

Next, equip participants to ground troubled thoughts in the truth of God’s Word, especially when painful memories arise. Psalm 46:10 calls for stillness: “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 34:18 offers comfort: “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” And Lamentations 3:22-23 assures daily mercy: “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”

Lead a grounding exercise where participants model vocal declaration, e.g., “God is near me,” to build confidence. Monitor for agitation, pausing to pray, “Lord, bring Your peace,” to ensure emotional stability. Provide a handout with key verses (e.g., Psalm 34:18, Lamentations 3:22-23) for daily use, emphasizing Scripture’s power to reframe perspectives. This practice anchors participants in God’s truth, fostering resilience for the healing journey.

**Empowering Participants to Take Authority Over Their Thoughts**

A critical step is empowering participants to exercise authority over their thoughts, rejecting falsehoods that oppose God’s truth. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 provides the foundation: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” This passage equips participants, especially those with trauma or destructive thought patterns (e.g., from addiction), to reclaim their minds for Christ’s purposes.

Begin by explaining that God gives believers authority to reject lies, using 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. Demonstrate the process with an example: for a thought like “I’m worthless,” say, “In Jesus’ name, I reject this lie,” and recite Psalm 139:14 : “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” Facilitate a group activity where participants confess a past negative thought (e.g., fear, doubt), pair up, and counter it with Scripture, such as Psalm 34:18 or John 16:33 : “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Provide a verse list for reference.

Monitor responses closely, watching for signs of emotional struggle like silence or restlessness. If distress arises, pause and pray, “Lord, bring Your truth,” ensuring participants feel secure, especially those with trauma. Assign a daily task: write one negative thought, reject it in Jesus’ name, and replace it with Scripture, reviewing progress in the next session to build accountability. For example, if a participant recovering from addiction says, “I’ll never be free,” pause, pray, and guide them to open a physical Bible (no phones, tablets, or devices), recite Psalm 34:18, and declare John 8:36 : “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Check in privately post-session, affirming their courage. This empowers participants to foster mental and spiritual stability.

**Comforting the Soul Through Worship and Prayer**

Guide participants to find rest in God’s presence through worship and prayer, drawing on Jesus’ invitation in Matthew 11:28 : “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Psalm 27:1 offers strength: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” And John 14:26 promises the Holy Spirit’s comfort: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

Lead a worship activity by singing Psalm 27:1 or a simple hymn, distributing physical Bibles for participants to hold as a reminder of Christ’s victory. Model a short prayer: “Holy Spirit, bring us rest.” Encourage daily worship as a spiritual discipline, especially for those with heavy burdens. If a participant shows distress, pause, pray with them, and suggest saying, “Jesus, give me Your rest,” to focus their heart back to Him. For example, guide a struggling participant to get a Bible and pray, reinforcing God’s peace. Recommend singing a psalm daily to sustain comfort, helping participants find solace in God’s presence.

**Shepherding with Wisdom and Gentleness**

Your role as a RD instructor requires wisdom and gentleness, as Jesus instructed Peter in John 21:15-17 : “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs… He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep… He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”

Study Scripture daily to grow in wisdom, and train to recognize distress signs like silence or agitation. Practice pausing sessions to pray, using Psalms or simple prayers like, “Lord, bring Your peace.” Rehearse scenarios in training, such as responding to a participant’s distress by praying Psalm 23:1-2 and checking in gently. Prioritize participants’ well-being over session progress, reflecting Jesus’ heart. For example, if a participant shows distress, pray Psalm 23:1-2, wait for God’s peace, and follow up privately, ensuring they feel cared for.

**Encouraging Participants to Step in Faith**

Encourage participants to trust God’s guidance as they prepare for conviction, where the Holy Spirit reveals memories, trauma, and sinful patterns. Deuteronomy 31:8 promises: “And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” John 16:13 assures the Spirit’s guidance: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

Share stories of God’s faithfulness, either from Scripture (e.g., Deuteronomy 31:8) or your life, to build confidence. Ask questions such as, “How has God helped you before?” Encourage daily prayer and Bible reading, providing a simple plan (e.g., read one Psalm daily). For participants hesitant about conviction, pray John 16:13, affirming, “God is with you, step by step.” Pace the process carefully, ensuring they feel ready before advancing. Suggest journaling answered prayers to reinforce trust, helping participants step forward with faith in God’s promises.

**Concluding with God’s Peace**

Conclude each session by reinforcing God’s promise of peace, as Jesus declares in John 16:33 : “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Summarize the session, emphasizing God’s tools: His Word, presence, and community. Lead a closing prayer, asking for strength for participants and wisdom for yourself. Encourage trust in God’s guidance, reminding them of your support and the church community. Follow up individually with those showing distress, ensuring they feel safe to continue.

**Practical Training Steps**

To lead effectively, incorporate these practical steps into your preparation and facilitation:

**Prepare Spiritually**: Begin each session with personal prayer and Scripture, such as Psalm 23:1-2, asking God to guide your words and heart.

**Create a Safe Environment**: Arrange a calm, private space free from distractions to foster safety.

**Use Spirit-Led Activities**: Incorporate group prayer, worship, and Scripture declaration to build faith.

**Monitor Progress**: Check in regularly with participants, noting emotional responses in a discreet journal and adjusting pacing as needed.

**Seek Support**: Collaborate with church leaders for support when necessary, keeping in mind the extreme importance of confidentiality.

Consider a scenario where a new Christian with a history of addiction becomes quiet during a session. Notice their distress, pause, and pray Psalm 23:1-2, saying, “Lord, be their shepherd.” Encourage them to open a physical Bible and recite Psalm 34:18 to feel God’s nearness. After the session, affirm their courage. This reflects your role as a compassionate shepherd, guiding them

# Section 7 Discussion Questions:

Preparation and Stabilization for the Process of Healing

1. What is the sacred calling of Restorative Discipleship Instructors as described in Section 7, and how does reliance on the Holy Spirit and Psalm 107:20 shape their approach to guiding disciples toward healing?
2. Explain the importance of creating a trauma-informed, supportive environment for participants. How can instructors use Psalm 23:1-2 to foster a sense of safety and trust in God during sessions?
3. Discuss the instructor’s responsibility to cultivate their inner life through daily prayer and Scripture (Ephesians 3:16). How does this practice enhance their ability to minister effectively to those with severe trauma?
4. Why is pacing sessions slowly and pausing for distress critical in trauma-informed ministry? Provide an example of how an instructor might respond to a participant showing signs of agitation using Psalm 91:1-2.
5. How can instructors set a compassionate tone at the start of a session using Psalm 107:20? Describe how this approach prepares participants, especially those with histories of addiction, for the healing journey.
6. Reflect on the process of teaching participants to find safety in God through scriptures like Psalm 46:1 and Psalm 91:1-2. How can instructors guide a participant to create a safe space through prayer and recitation?
7. Describe the grounding exercise of anchoring participants in God’s Word using vocal declarations like “God is near me” (Psalm 34:18). How does this practice help stabilize emotions when painful memories arise?
8. Explain how instructors empower participants to take authority over their thoughts using 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. Provide an example of a negative thought a participant might reject and the scriptural truth they could use to replace it.
9. Discuss the role of worship and prayer in comforting the soul, as guided by Matthew 11:28 and John 14:26. How can instructors encourage daily worship as a spiritual discipline for participants with heavy burdens?
10. In the context of encouraging participants to step in faith (Deuteronomy 31:8, John 16:13), how can instructors use stories of God’s faithfulness to build confidence? Describe how journaling answered prayers might reinforce trust in God’s guidance.

# Section 8: The RESTORE Process

**Objective:** Provide Restorative Discipleship Instructors with a step-by-step process to guide disciples from trauma to freedom using God’s Word (Psalm 107:20; Matthew 8:8; Hebrews 12:3).

1. **Steps for Restorative Discipleship Instructors (RESTORE):**
   1. **Reveal: Establish Gospel Knowledge**
      1. Ask: “What does the gospel mean to you?” Reinforce its power for all bondage (Romans 1:16).
      2. Ask: “How do you think the gospel relate to your trauma?”
      3. Present the gospel narrative (Section 1), asking if they believe it.
         1. If yes, proceed to Conviction.
         2. If no, continue ministering the gospel. If they refuse, note Truth Over Trauma is for believers, end prayerfully for the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to them.
   2. **Examine: Identify Trauma Across Life Stages**
      1. Use the chart to explore blessings and curses:
      2. Prompt disciples to pray, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal trauma at each stage. Note: This is why Truth Over Trauma is for believers. One must know Christ to ask anything of the Holy Spirit.
      3. Instruct disciples to write memories without conclusions, gathering facts for later analysis.
   3. **Surrender: Ownership and Repentance**
      1. Ask: “What sinful behaviors did you adopt because of this trauma?” Name patterns (e.g., anger, isolation).
      2. Guide repentance: “I repent for believing [lie]. Because of this, I sinned by [behavior].”
      3. Affirm God’s mercy and forgiveness (Psalm 103:17; Revelation 2:5).
   4. **Transform: Replace Lies with Truth**
      1. Replace each lie with scriptural truth, spoken in faith (e.g., “I am fearfully and wonderfully made,” Psalm 139:14).
      2. Encourage declarative faith: “I believe and confess this truth” (Mark 11:23; Hebrews 4:2).
   5. **Overcome:**
      1. Offer a blessing over each life stage, invoking God’s authority through the Name of Jesus.
      2. Address spiritual oppression with prayer, expelling weakened demonic influences if necessary (Psalm 34:4; 2 Corinthians 10:4).
   6. **Renew:**
      1. Assign works of piety (e.g., scripture memorization, deeper gospel study) and works of mercy (e.g., serving others, showing compassion) to reinforce healing (John 8:31).
   7. **Endure:**
      1. Use the 5Q Method of discipleship for ongoing devotion.

The RESTORE Process:

Restoring the Soul Through the Word of God

Healing from trauma is a sacred, transformative journey, one that hinges on the power of God’s Word as the ultimate agent of restoration. Psalm 107:20 declares, “He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions,” encapsulating the core of the RESTORE process. For Restorative Discipleship Instructors, guiding disciples through this journey requires a structured, scripture-centered approach that integrates foundational considerations of Reveal, Examine, Surrender, Transform, Overcome, Renew, and Endure. This section explores each phase in depth, emphasizing how the Word, activated by faith, dismantles trauma’s lies, replaces them with truth, and fosters a life of love and service. By examining every stage of life, this process offers a comprehensive path from brokenness to wholeness, grounded in Christ’s enduring presence and the transformative authority of scripture. It is the act of exposing every lie, and winning the Christian to Jesus Christ.

**Foundational Considerations: The Word as the Bedrock**

The healing process begins with foundational truths that anchor disciples in God’s unchanging reality. First, instructors must emphasize Jesus’ constant companionship across all life stages, as Hebrews 12:3 urges: “Consider Him who endured such hostility… lest you become weary and faint in your minds.” Trauma often fosters a sense of abandonment, leaving disciples isolated in their pain. Yet, recognizing Jesus as present—from conception through adulthood—counters this despair. A disciple who endured childhood neglect might feel no one was there to care, but reflecting on Christ’s nearness at every moment offers a lifeline of comfort and resilience. This truth prevents the soul from buckling under trauma’s oppressive weight, providing a foundation of hope.

Second, the authority of God’s Word is paramount, as illustrated in Matthew 8:8: “Speak the word only, and my servant will be healed.” The centurion’s faith highlights a critical principle: while remembering trauma is permissible, the Word, mixed with faith, must remain the primary agent of healing. Instructors guide disciples to engage this truth by asking, “If you were still [age] years old, what emotion would you want Jesus to visit?” A disciple recalling adolescent rejection might say, “Fear,” prompting a response from Psalm 34:4: “I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” *This scripture reveals a profound insight—fears are often not just echoes of past events but projections of future pain based on trauma*. For example, a fear of rejection might stem from a teenage betrayal, now manifesting as anxiety about relationships. The Word, spoken in faith, dispels these shadows, offering deliverance.

Finally, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 equips disciples with spiritual weapons: “Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ, and bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Trauma breeds lies—imaginations like “I’m worthless” or “I’ll always fail”—that exalt themselves against God’s truth. A disciple who faced repeated failures might believe they’re defective, but the Word, wielded with faith, demolishes these strongholds. Instructors teach disciples to confront such thoughts head-on, replacing them with scripture like Psalm 139:14: “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” These foundational considerations establish a bedrock where Jesus’ presence and scripture’s power prepare disciples for the healing journey, rooting out fear and falsehood with divine authority.

**Reveal: Foundational Knowledge of the Gospel**

Healing demands a deep, personal understanding of the gospel, described in Romans 1:16 as “the power of God unto salvation.” **Instructors begin by asking, “What does the gospel mean to you?”** This question opens a dialogue, revealing disciples’ grasp of its scope. A disciple bound by guilt might initially say, “Jesus died for my sins,” a partial truth that instructors expand: the gospel is also freedom from sin’s dominion, restoration of identity, and victory over bondage. It’s the answer to everything—every area of captivity, whether fear, shame, or despair, reflects a lack of this power. For a disciple haunted by past abuse, the gospel promises not just forgiveness but liberation from shame’s chains.

**The follow-up question, “Do you believe the gospel?”** tests the foundation of faith. Belief here is not mere intellectual assent but active, transformative trust. If a disciple hesitates, perhaps doubting God’s love after years of unanswered prayers, instructors patiently teach the gospel’s fullness—Christ’s death, resurrection, and triumph over evil—using scriptures like Romans 1:16 and John 8:36: “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” This stage ensures disciples stand firmly on the gospel’s truth, equipped to confront trauma with its liberating power. For example, a person who sees the gospel as irrelevant to their pain might be guided to Romans 8:1—“There is now no condemnation”—shifting their perspective from despair to hope.

**Examine: Identifying Trauma Across Life Stages**

Conviction involves a detailed examination of trauma across life stages, using a chart to contrast blessings with curses:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Event | Scripture | Blessing | Curse |
| Conception | Psalm 127:3; Jeremiah 1:4 | My conception was a blessing. | I was an accident. |
| Pregnancy | Luke 1:41-42; Isaiah 49:5 | I was the Father’s idea. | I was not wanted. |
| Birth | John 16:21 | My birth brought joy! | I shouldn’t have been born. |
| Early Childhood | Mark 10:16; Luke 18:15-17 | I am important to the Father. | I am not good enough. |
| Adolescence | Proverbs 31:30 | I am praiseworthy. | I am not worthy. |
| Young Adulthood | Luke 1:45 | I am blessed with promises. | I don’t have what it takes. |
| Full Adulthood | Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 31:28 | I am worthy of honor. | I don’t matter. |

Instructors explain trauma’s potential at each stage, offering examples to connect with disciples’ experiences. Conception might be marred by parental rejection, pregnancy by maternal stress, birth by complications, childhood by neglect, adolescence by bullying, young adulthood by failure, and full adulthood by loss of purpose. This sets the stage for remembrance, guided by the Holy Spirit, where disciples explore specific questions for each phase:

1. **Conception**
   * *How did my parents feel about my conception?* Did they rejoice, or was it a burden? A disciple might learn their parents struggled financially, planting a seed of “I was an accident.”
   * *Was there a question about “keeping” me, or did they consider abortion?* Hearing a mother contemplated termination could foster a curse of unworthiness.
   * *Was there any trauma associated with my conception?* Perhaps an unplanned pregnancy introduced shame, subtly shaping the disciple’s identity.
2. **Pregnancy**
   * *Was I wanted in the womb by both parents?* A father’s absence might suggest rejection, reinforcing “I was not wanted.”
   * *Was my father involved in the pregnancy?* If he was detached, a disciple might feel unvalued from the start.
   * *Did my mother experience trauma while pregnant with me?* Domestic violence or severe stress could imprint fear, as if the disciple absorbed her pain.
   * *Was there any trauma associated with my pregnancy?* Miscarriage threats or medical crises might leave a legacy of fragility.
3. **Birth**
   * *Were there complications at birth?* A near-death experience or prolonged labor might whisper, “I shouldn’t have been born.”
   * *Were my parents happy to see me?* Disappointment over gender—“We wanted a boy”—could sow early rejection.
   * *Did they want me as the gender I am?* A mismatch in expectations might fuel identity struggles.
   * *Was there any trauma associated with my birth?* A mother’s postpartum depression could cast a shadow of disconnection.
4. **Early Childhood**
   * *Were my earliest memories happy ones?* Abuse or instability might overwrite joy with “I’m not good enough.”
   * *Were both parents raising me?* Divorce or abandonment could breed insecurity.
   * *What was the quality of my social life as a child?* Bullying or isolation might cement a sense of inadequacy.
   * *Was there any trauma associated with my early childhood?* Witnessing violence or losing a sibling could embed deep fears.
5. **Adolescence**
   * *What was the quality of my relationship with my biological mom?* A critical mother might teach “I’m not worthy.”
   * *What was the quality of my relationship with my biological dad?* An absent father could reinforce abandonment.
   * *What was the quality of my relationship with siblings (if any)?* Rivalry or neglect might foster competition or isolation.
   * *What was the quality of my social life?* Rejection by peers could solidify unworthiness.
   * *Was there any trauma associated with my adolescence?* Assault or academic failure might trigger shame or despair.
6. **Young Adulthood**
   * *Are my father and mother proud of me?* Parental disapproval could echo, “I don’t have what it takes.”
   * *Did I socialize in a healthy way as a young adult?* Addiction or toxic relationships might reflect unresolved pain.
   * *Did I reach academic or career goals as a young adult?* Failure to launch could deepen inadequacy.
   * *Was there any trauma associated with my young adulthood?* A breakup or job loss might instill fear of instability.
7. **Full Adulthood**
   * *Do I believe my work matters in the world?* A lack of purpose might whisper, “I don’t matter.”
   * *Am I honored and respected by others, including spouse and children?* Disrespect or estrangement could fuel failure’s curse.
   * *Does my health indicate I will live a long, fulfilling life?* Chronic illness might breed despair.
   * *Was there any trauma associated with my adult life?* Divorce or financial ruin could cement a sense of defeat.

**Instructors admonish disciples to pray, asking the Holy Spirit to unearth hidden traumas—perhaps a forgotten argument or a subtle rejection.** They also suggest consulting safe loved ones for additional perspectives, like a sibling recalling parental tension. All memories, major or minor, are recorded without judgment, stored securely. This stage focuses solely on uncovering facts, not drawing conclusions, preparing disciples for the next step of correction.

**Surrender: Ownership and Repentance**

**Surrender shifts focus to ownership, asking, “What destructive behaviors did you adopt because of this trauma, and how do I surrender these things to God?”** A disciple rejected at birth might admit to isolation, believing, “I’m unlovable.” Instructors explain these behaviors—anger, withdrawal, addiction—as sinful patterns fueled by lies and emotions like fear or shame. Using biblical insight, they frame isolation as a rejection of community (Hebrews 10:25) or anger as a foothold for evil (Ephesians 4:27), helping disciples name specific sins.

Disciples then talk to Jesus: “I repent for believing I’m unlovable. Because of this lie, I sinned by isolating myself” (Revelation 2:5). They affirm God’s mercy—“from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 103:17)—and seek forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). This ownership empowers disciples to take responsibility for their responses, not their trauma.

The return phase replaces lies with truth. For “I’m unlovable,” Psalm 139:14—“I am fearfully and wonderfully made”—is declared with faith. Mark 11:23 emphasizes declarative belief: “You shall have what you say.” Instructors stress that faith without confession lacks power (Hebrews 4:2), encouraging disciples to hold fast their new identity. With the help of church leaders, it’s important to bless each life stage, invoking God’s authority, and if spiritual oppression lingers, prayer expels weakened demons, as in 2 Corinthians 10:4.

Foundational truths establish Christ’s presence and scripture’s power, gospel teaching grounds disciples in salvation, conviction uncovers trauma’s roots, correction replaces lies with truth, and ongoing discipleship sustains healing. By engaging every life stage, this process dismantles bondage, restoring the soul to love and serve, fulfilling Psalm 107:20’s promise of deliverance.

**Transform: Replace Lies with Truth**

Trauma embeds false beliefs in the soul, such as “I’m unlovable” from rejection or “I’m worthless” from abuse, which keep individuals trapped in emotional and spiritual bondage. These lies distort perceptions of self, others, and God, fostering despair and disconnection. The healing process counters this by guiding disciples to identify these falsehoods and replace them with biblical truths spoken in faith. For instance, a disciple who believes “I’m defective” due to past failures can declare, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14), aligning their identity with God’s design. This faith-filled declaration, rooted in the principle that what one speaks in belief shapes reality (Mark 11:23), empowers disciples to reject trauma’s narrative and embrace God’s truth, fundamentally transforming their understanding of themselves and their circumstances.

This act of replacing lies with Scripture is an active, intentional engagement with God’s Word, requiring disciples to confront trauma’s emotional residue—fear, shame, or anger—with divine truth. For example, a disciple burdened by guilt from moral failure might confess, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1), dismantling the lie that they are unforgivable. Similarly, someone gripped by fear from past violence can proclaim, “In me you may have peace” (John 16:33), finding stability in Christ’s victory. These truths, when spoken and believed, act as spiritual weapons, casting down imaginations that oppose God’s knowledge (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Through prayer and communal support, disciples immerse themselves in God’s Word, allowing it to renew their minds and restore their capacity to love God, themselves, and others. This process shifts the soul from a state of despair, described as a “pit” of destruction (Psalm 107:20), to one of hope and purpose, where God’s truth becomes the foundation for a new identity.

The church plays a crucial role in this transformation by providing a community where truth is reinforced through worship, teaching, and acts of service. Instructors, acting as shepherds, guide disciples to memorize and declare scriptures like “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18), helping them overcome trauma’s lingering effects. By fostering an environment of prayer and accountability, the church ensures that these truths take root, turning fleeting affirmations into a lived reality. For example, a disciple who once believed “I’m alone” might find this lie replaced with “The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Psalm 27:1) through communal recitation and support. This collective reinforcement transforms the disciple’s heart, turning pain into a powerful testimony of God’s redemptive love. Where lies once held sway, truth now reigns, fulfilling the promise that “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36), enabling disciples to live fully for God’s glory.

**Overcome: Blessing and Deliverance**

Both blessing and deliverance are essential for complete restoration. Trauma often leaves disciples vulnerable to spiritual oppression, where lies like “I’m powerless” or “I’m cursed” take root, fostering a sense of defeat. Deliverance, through prayer in Jesus’ name, expels these weakened demonic influences, as the guide highlights with the spiritual weapons described in 2 Corinthians 10:4, which are “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” However, deliverance alone is insufficient without blessing. However, blessing is crucial to fill the void left by oppression with God’s affirming truth. Through the truth of God’s Word, RD Instructors pronounce blessings over each life stage—conception through adulthood—declaring truths like “You are a blessing, not cursed” (Psalm 127:3) or “You are honorable” (Proverbs 31:28). This dual process ensures disciples are not only freed from darkness but also anchored in God’s redemptive purpose, transforming their identity from one of bondage to one of divine favor.

Blessing complements deliverance by proactively restoring what trauma has stolen, addressing the emotional and spiritual scars that linger. While deliverance breaks the chains of oppression—such as fear or shame that resurface in moments of weakness—blessing speaks life into the disciple’s story, countering lies with God’s promises. For instance, a disciple haunted by rejection might be delivered from a spirit of abandonment through prayer, but without blessing, they may still feel unworthy. A blessing like “You are chosen and loved by God” (Colossians 3:12) reaffirms their value, planting seeds of hope and resilience. This act mirrors Jesus’ ministry of healing and restoration, as seen in His deliverance of the oppressed and His words of affirmation to the broken (Luke 4:18-19). By blessing each life stage, instructors rewrite the narrative of trauma, ensuring disciples see themselves as God’s beloved, empowered to live free from the enemy’s influence and filled with divine purpose.

The necessity of both blessing and deliverance lies in their combined power to overcome trauma’s lasting effects, fostering a holistic transformation. Deliverance without blessing risks leaving disciples vulnerable to new lies, as the enemy seeks to reassert control over an unguarded heart. Conversely, blessing without deliverance may fail to address entrenched spiritual strongholds, limiting the depth of healing. Together, they form a complete act of restoration: deliverance clears the darkness, and blessing floods the soul with light. The RD Instructor’s role is vital here, using the authority of the name of Jesus, and the Word of God, ensuring disciples not only overcome trauma but thrive in a life marked by God’s truth and love, as promised in John 8:36, “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

**Renew: Ongoing Discipleship through Piety and Mercy**

Ongoing discipleship through piety and mercy is a vital process for renewing the soul, ensuring that healing from trauma is not a one-time event but a sustained lifestyle of practical action. Piety, expressed through practices like prayer, scripture memorization, and worship, roots disciples in God’s truth, reinforcing their freedom from trauma’s lies. For example, memorizing Romans 8:1, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit…” helps a disciple counter guilt from past failures, renewing their mind daily with God’s grace. Mercy, manifested in acts like serving others or showing compassion, extends this renewal outward, transforming pain into purpose. A disciple who once isolated due to rejection might volunteer at a church outreach, embodying “Let your light so shine before men” (Matthew 5:16), and find their heart healed through love for others. This dual lifestyle of piety and mercy, lived out in practical steps, ensures that disciples remain anchored in God’s Word and connected to His mission, fostering continuous growth and resilience.

Piety and mercy are not abstract ideals but actionable disciplines that renew the disciple’s identity and relationships. Piety involves daily engagement with God, such as praying Psalm 23:1, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want,” to cultivate trust, or studying Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” to deepen gospel understanding. These practices fortify the soul against trauma’s lingering fears, like the anxiety of abandonment, by grounding disciples in truths like “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:8). Mercy, in turn, translates this inner renewal into tangible acts—visiting the sick, mentoring a struggling peer, or forgiving a past offender—reflecting “Put on… compassion, kindness, humility” (Colossians 3:12). Such actions break cycles of self-focus, common in trauma’s aftermath, and align disciples with God’s call to love others. By consistently practicing these disciplines, disciples move from victimhood to victory, their lives becoming a testimony of God’s transformative love.

The church is essential in sustaining this lifestyle, providing a community where piety and mercy are modeled and reinforced. Through worship services, disciples are renewed by singing truths like “The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Psalm 27:1), while small groups offer accountability for daily prayer and scripture reading. Mercy finds expression in church-led initiatives, such as feeding the hungry, where disciples live out “Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for Me” (Matthew 25:40). This communal support ensures that piety and mercy become habits, not occasional acts, helping disciples overcome trauma’s pull toward despair or isolation. By embedding these practices in everyday life, disciples fulfill John 8:31’s call to “abide in My word,” experiencing ongoing renewal that not only heals but empowers them to reflect Christ’s love, making their freedom enduring and their purpose clear in a life of service and devotion.

**Engage: Active Involvement in a Healthy Church**

Active involvement in a healthy church is a critical component of the healing process, emphasizing that participation in a vibrant church community is not optional but a priority for sustained recovery from trauma. This is where even “Christian” counseling falls short, de-emphasizing the importance of the institution God has set in place as a community of healing, as outlined in Ephesians 4:11-13, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Active involvement in a healthy church provides disciples with a supportive environment where God’s Word, worship, and fellowship counteract trauma’s isolating lies, such as “I’m alone” or “I’m unlovable.” By regularly attending gatherings, engaging in small groups, and serving in ministries, disciples experience the transformative power of the church community, as seen in Hebrews 10:25, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” This prioritization of church involvement ensures that healing is not a solitary journey but a communal one, rooted in shared faith and mutual encouragement, fostering resilience and spiritual growth.

Pastoral leadership is paramount in this process, serving as the cornerstone of a healthy church’s ability to nurture ongoing healing. Pastors, as shepherds, provide doctrinal guidance, spiritual oversight, and pastoral care, equipping disciples to navigate trauma’s complexities through sermons, pastoral counseling, and other initiatives.

While Restorative Discipleship (RD) Instructors play a vital role in guiding disciples through structured healing steps, they may not be the disciple’s pastor, and their role is distinct from the long-term pastoral care required for sustained renewal. For instance, an RD Instructor might help a disciple replace the lie “God is angry” with “There is now no condemnation” (Romans 8:1), but the pastor’s ongoing ministry—through preaching Colossians 3:12-15’s call to love and forgiveness or offering personal counsel—deepens this truth in the disciple’s life. The church’s pastoral leadership creates a stable framework where disciples can grow, serve, and heal, making it essential for instructors to encourage disciples to connect with their pastor for continued spiritual direction.

There comes a critical point where the facilitation of ongoing healing must transition from the RD Instructor to pastoral care, ensuring that disciples remain anchored in a church community for long-term transformation. This handoff is vital because *healing from trauma requires more than initial breakthroughs*; it demands a lifestyle of worship, accountability, and service, best sustained under a pastor’s guidance. For example, a disciple who has overcome spiritual abuse through RD sessions might begin serving in a church outreach, but their pastor’s mentorship—perhaps through teaching “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16)—helps them maintain freedom and grow in love. By prioritizing active involvement in a healthy church, disciples engage in practices like communal prayer and acts of mercy, fulfilling Matthew 5:16’s call to “let your light shine.” This church-centered engagement, supported by pastoral leadership, transforms trauma’s pain into a testimony of God’s redemptive love, ensuring that disciples not only heal but thrive in a life of purpose and connection, as promised in John 8:36, “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

In Conclusion

As we conclude "Truth Over Trauma," we are reminded of the gospel’s profound strength—the liberating truth that, as Jesus affirmed, “If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). To you, Restorative Discipleship Instructors, we extend our sincere appreciation and prayers. You play a vital role in guiding individuals from the depths of trauma into a life transformed by God’s love, where the soul is restored. May you find renewed strength through prayer and Scripture, equipping you to lead with resilience and compassion. We trust that your commitment to loving God, nurturing your own well-being, and serving others will continue to breathe life into the church, turning stories of pain into powerful testimonies of hope. As you walk alongside disciples, wielding the Word to dismantle falsehoods and ignite faith, know that you carry the gospel’s transformative power—a force that redeems and renews (Romans 1:16). May your efforts be blessed, your resolve deepened, and your ministering reflect the redemptive work of Christ’s cross, bringing healing and wholeness to countless lives in the days ahead. *Now, go and win the Church to Christ!*

# Section 8 Discussion Questions:

The RESTORE Process

1. How does the RESTORE process capture the sacred, transformative journey of healing from trauma, and why is Psalm 107:20 central to its approach in emphasizing God’s Word as the ultimate agent of restoration?
2. Discuss the foundational consideration of Jesus’ constant companionship across all life stages (Hebrews 12:3). How can instructors use this truth to help a disciple overcome feelings of abandonment caused by childhood trauma?
3. In the Reveal step, why is establishing foundational knowledge of the gospel (Romans 1:16) critical before proceeding to other stages? How can instructors address a disciple’s hesitation to believe the gospel, ensuring a compassionate response?
4. Explain the Examine step’s use of the life stages chart to identify trauma. How can instructors guide disciples to pray for the Holy Spirit’s revelation of hidden traumas, and why is this step significant for believers specifically?
5. Reflect on the Surrender step, particularly the focus on ownership and repentance. How can instructors help a disciple name sinful behaviors (e.g., anger from rejection) and use scriptures like Psalm 103:17 to affirm God’s mercy during repentance?
6. Describe the Transform step’s process of replacing lies with scriptural truth. Provide an example of a trauma-induced lie and how an instructor might use Mark 11:23 and Psalm 139:14 to guide a disciple in declaring truth with faith.
7. In the Overcome step, why is both blessing and deliverance necessary for complete restoration? Discuss how instructors can use 2 Corinthians 10:4 and Colossians 3:12 to address spiritual oppression and affirm a disciple’s identity.
8. Discuss the Renew step’s emphasis on ongoing discipleship through piety and mercy. How can instructors encourage a disciple to integrate practices like scripture memorization (e.g., Romans 8:1) and acts of service (e.g., Matthew 5:16) into their daily life?
9. Why is the Engage step’s prioritization of active involvement in a healthy church crucial for sustained healing? How can instructors facilitate the transition from their guidance to pastoral care, ensuring long-term transformation?
10. Reflect on the conclusion’s call to “win the Church to Christ.” How does the RESTORE process empower instructors to guide disciples from trauma’s depths to a life of love and service, fulfilling the promise of John 8:36, “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”?

About the Author

Pastor Nial Russell Burnett, Sr., is the founder and pastor of First Love Fellowship (FLF), a Full-Gospel ministry dedicated to unceasing prayer, intentional discipleship and missional living. He began his faith journey on January 14, 1989, and has since been an avid student of the Bible, and servant to the church. He leads FLF to reflect the early church’s focus on prayer, community, and gospel outreach with house churches and outreach ministries in several locations across the United States. Niral also spearheads the Restorative Discipleship (RD) Intensive, and the Truth Over Trauma process of freedom which offers ongoing discipleship and Bible-based recovery, respectively. He earned his undergraduate degree in Business at St. Gregory’s University and his master’s degree in theology at Wesley Biblical Seminary.

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