

Small Group Bible Study

From Shame to Stewardship: Peter's Denial, Restoration, and Our Emotions

Texts: Luke 22:54–62; John 21:1–19

Focus: Understanding shame and learning to steward our emotions in the presence of Jesus

1. Opening (5–10 minutes)

Opening Question (low-risk):

When you hear the word *shame*, what images or feelings come to mind?

(You can invite people to answer with one word or short phrase.)

Prayer:

Invite God to help the group notice both the *text* and their *inner life*—their thoughts, emotions, and reactions.

2. Scripture Reading: Peter's Denial (Luke 22:54–62) (10 minutes)

Have one or two people read the passage slowly.

Key Moment to Highlight:

“The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.” (v. 61)

Observation Questions

- What emotions do you imagine Peter felt during the denial?
- What details stand out to you that you may have missed before?
- How does Peter respond physically and emotionally after the rooster crows?

Teaching Insight:

Peter's shame is not just guilt over a wrong action; it's the collapse of his *self-image*—the

brave, loyal disciple discovers he is capable of betrayal. Shame says, “*I am a failure*,” not just “*I failed*.”

Emotional Stewardship Note:

Peter does not deny his emotions—he weeps bitterly. Naming pain is not weakness; it is the beginning of honest stewardship.

3. Understanding Shame (10 minutes)

Brief Teaching Point:

- **Guilt** focuses on behavior: “*I did something wrong.*”
- **Shame** focuses on identity: “*Something is wrong with me.*”

Shame thrives in:

- Isolation
- Silence
- Fear of being fully known

Peter’s instinct is withdrawal—but Jesus’ story with Peter is not finished.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think shame makes us want to hide or withdraw?
- When emotions like shame show up, do you tend to ignore them, suppress them, or let them overwhelm you?

4. Scripture Reading: Peter’s Restoration (John 21:1–19) (15 minutes)

Invite the group to listen for emotional and relational details.

Observation Questions

- What similarities do you notice between Peter's denial scene and this restoration scene? (fire, three questions, public setting)
- How does Jesus engage Peter emotionally?
- What *doesn't* Jesus do that you might expect Him to do?

Teaching Insight:

Jesus does not shame Peter for his shame.

He does not rush forgiveness or minimize the pain.

Instead, He creates a space where love can be spoken out loud again.

Each “Do you love me?” gently addresses a wound—without condemnation.

Emotional Stewardship Note:

Jesus invites Peter to *revisit* the place of shame—but in safety. Healthy stewardship sometimes means returning to painful emotions with Christ, not avoiding them.

5. Stewarding Our Emotions Well (15 minutes)

Key Principle:

Emotions are not enemies to faith; they are indicators and invitations.

Peter learns:

- Not to let shame define his identity
- Not to let fear dictate his future
- Not to rush past emotions without bringing them to Jesus

Group Discussion:

- What might it look like to bring emotions like shame, fear, or regret to Jesus rather than hiding them?
- How does Jesus' question, “*Do you love me?*” reframe Peter’s failure?
- What emotions do you find hardest to steward well?

Practical Framework for Emotional Stewardship:

1. **Notice** – What am I feeling?
2. **Name** – Why might I be feeling this?
3. **Offer** – Bring it honestly to Jesus.
4. **Receive** – Listen for truth rather than accusation.
5. **Respond** – Take the next faithful step.

6. Personal Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Invite quiet reflection before optional sharing.

Reflection Questions:

- Where might shame still be speaking louder than grace in my life?
- What emotion have I been avoiding that Jesus may be inviting me to face with Him?
- What would it sound like for Jesus to speak my name—not accusation, but invitation?

7. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

You might pray something like:

“Jesus, You see us fully—our courage and our fear, our love and our denial. Teach us to steward our emotions with honesty and trust. Where shame has silenced us, restore our voice. Where fear has named us, rename us in love. Amen.”