

Reconnecting After Trauma: Moving from Hurt to Hope

Presented by Sallie Nyenhuis

GOD OUR

PROVIDER

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

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Introduction



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Objectives for *Reconnecting After Trauma*

1. Understand the impact of trauma among incarcerated individuals
2. Learn the benefits of faith-based trauma healing groups
3. Practice three biblically grounded, trauma-informed questions that promote healing
4. Strengthen your ability to serve as safe listeners in correctional ministry

Healing the Wounded Heart Video

[Video](#)

Trauma

Trauma is what happens inside of someone as a result of what happened to them. It leaves a lasting imprint on a person.

OVERWHELMED with



- Trauma is a risk factor in nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders.
- 70% of the population have experienced at least one traumatic event.
 - Over 90% for the jail population
- 10.6% of adults in general population experience mental health problems compared to:
 - 64.2% of jail inmates
 - 56.2% of state prisoners
 - 44.8% of federal prisoners
- Jail inmates remain less likely to receive treatment than state or federal prisoners.

What the Research Shows

Assessing Faith Based Trauma Healing Among Jail Inmates - The Baylor Study

- 90 % of incarcerated participants experience trauma
- Trauma Healing Groups reduce trauma symptoms
- Impact seen after just 5 sessions
- Results sustained after Healing Group completion.

What Changed for Incarcerated Participants

Greater ability to **talk about pain rather than act it out**

Reduced desire for retaliation or self-destruction

Increased capacity to trust, reflect, and engage spiritually

New Language to understand suffering without shame

Why Healing Groups Work in Jail & Prison Settings

They provide a **safe, structured space** for storytelling and listening

They normalize pain while pointing toward **biblical hope and restoration**

They do not require participants to relive trauma, but to **bring pain to God**

They equip participants with tools they can continue using back in their cells

Implications for Chaplains

Trauma awareness is **not optional** in correctional ministry - it is foundational

Chaplains are uniquely positioned to:

- Create emotionally and spiritually safe environments
- Model healthy listening rather than fixing
- Integrate Scripture with psychological wisdom

Healing groups support not only inmate well-being, but **facility culture, safety, and rehabilitation goals**

How can the wounds of our heart heal?

One way we can begin to heal is by talking about our pain. Usually we need to talk to another person about our pain before we are ready to talk to God about it. We may need to tell our story many times. If we are able to talk about our bad experiences, then after a while our reaction will become less and less intense. But if we are not able to talk about our pain, and if there is no one to help us, these reactions may continue for months and even years.

What begins to happen when we talk about our pain?

When we talk with someone who knows how to listen:

- We gain an honest understanding of what happened and how it affected us.
- We can accept what happened
- We can feel heard and know we are not alone
- We can become able to trust and rest in God, and let God begin to heal our hearts

What is a good listener like?

1. Creates a safe space
 - a. Cares about us
 - b. Will keep the information confidential
 - c. Will not criticize us or give quick solutions
 - d. Will not minimize our pain by comparing it with their own pain.
2. Asks helpful questions
3. Shows they are listening to us
 - a. Good eye contact, not distracted
 - b. Doesn't seem impatient
 - c. Says words of agreement like: "Mmm"

What is a good listener like - Continued

3. Shows they are listening to us (continued)
 - d. From time to time repeats what they think we've said - so we can correct, restate or affirm their understanding.

4. Respects the healing process
 - a. Notices if we become very distressed and knows it's not helpful to continue.
 - b. May gently ask us if we would like prayer - honor the decision.

The 3 Healing Questions

1. What Happened?

1. How did it make you feel?

1. What was the hardest part for you?

- Names the wound without requiring graphic detail
 - Restores dignity by allowing the person to tell their story.
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- Connects events to emotions often buried or suppressed
 - Helps shift from acting out pain to expressing it safely
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- Identifies the deepest impact of the trauma
- Often reveals loss, shame, fear or broken trust

What Happened?

Naming the wound

“Come, let us recount to the Lord what has happened.” Judges 11:27

“The Lord said, ‘What have you done?’” Genesis 4:10

God consistently invites people to **name their story** before He moves toward restoration. This question is not about details or blame - it is about dignity. Naming what happened brings pain out of isolation and into truth.

How did it make you feel?

Give language to the heart

“Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.” Psalm 62:8

“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?” Psalm

42:5

Scripture models emotional honesty. Feelings are not weakness; they are **part of how God designed the heart to process pain**. When we can name emotions, pain is less likely to be acted out through anger, withdraw, or self-destruction.

What was the hardest part for you?

Revealing the deepest wound

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” Matthew
26:38

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.” Psalm 34:18

Even Jesus named the deepest weight of His suffering. This question often reveals **loss, fear, shame, or betrayal** - the place where God longs to draw near. Healing often begins when the deepest wound is finally seen.

Workshop Practice Invitation

Turn to a partner and practice being a safe listener, not a counselor.

- One person shares using the 3 questions
- The other listens, reflects, and does not give advice
- Switch roles

This is how healing begins - one safe conversation at a time.

www.jailministry.org



Trauma Healing
INSTITUTE

Healing the Wounded Heart Initial Equipping Training

Online July 13-15, 2026 8:45a-3p EST

Deadline to register: June 26, 2026

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Websites: <https://jailministry.org/>

<https://traumahealinginstitute.org/>