

Running Away or Running To

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About this booklet

This booklet is written for anyone who finds themselves at a crossroads, faced with daily challenges that make them want to flee in the opposite direction.
But what if, instead of running away, you could discover the courage and wisdom to run toward the source of true strength?
The Apostle Peter faced similar struggles in his journey, and his story reveals timeless truths about overcoming fear and embracing faith.

I've walked this road too, and I'm eager to share the lessons God has taught me. This booklet is not just about finding strength for your battles—it's about experiencing the transformative power of running to Jesus.
With Him, even the hardest struggles become opportunities for growth and deeper trust.

As you read, I pray this booklet will inspire you, encourage you, and equip you to face life's challenges with renewed faith.

Let's embark on this journey together, discovering how to live fully for Him.

What about my testimony?

Middle school was the author of my ugly duckling chapter. I felt like such an oddball. I remember wanting to do some sort of sport. I was much too small to join the football team, so I tried out for the Track & Field team. At one of our practices, we had to run a four-mile path. I wanted to win, so I ran as fast as I could! Not even halfway through the course, I started spitting out all kinds of gross stuff. I could barely run.

It just so happened that my girlfriend's mom was driving by and saw me. She pulled over to see if I was alright. I was so tired of running that I asked her to give me a ride to the finish line. Needless to say, I got caught by another student. He told on me, and I was kicked off the team.

Looking back, it's almost funny. I thought getting a ride to the finish line would get me there quicker, but I was actually running away from my problem into a much bigger one! I had to face my parents and explain why I was kicked off the team. Ouch! I was so embarrassed, and my dad was not too happy with me either. I had to apologize to the coach, and I was grounded for what seemed like forever!

Most of my young life, I had a reputation for running away from my problems. I hurt a lot of people, and I hurt myself in the process. But everything changed when I decided to give Jesus a chance. With the help of God and others, I learned to run to Jesus instead of away from Him. Life stopped being a hopeless race and became an exciting journey of faith.

Now it is all I know how to do. I was tired of running a hopeless race that was just burning me out. But even after turning away from my old ways and making a new life with Jesus, I still found myself running from different ministry situations that became a bit overwhelming.

So I started reading about this one disciple called Peter. Now this guy was a runner like no other! Let's go on a journey with this man named Peter. Let's see how being around Jesus affected his running patterns.

Maybe, just maybe, they will affect the way you run.
I have never been so focused and passionate about running a race than I have running this race for my Jesus!

So put on your running shoes and find a comfortable chair (What?) and let's read away!

"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Lots of blessings... Mannie

1. Fishers Of Men

Luke 5:1–11

When first confronted by Jesus' awesomeness, Peter wanted to get away—and get away fast! Why? Because he knew he was not worthy to be in Jesus' presence. But Jesus' compassionate approach to Peter quickly opened his eyes to His authentic love. Instead of running away, Peter ran to Him. Peter left everything behind and followed Jesus. What about you? What are you running from?

In my younger years, I often ran away from one relationship to another, always feeling unsatisfied. When life got tough, I ran. But one day, there was nowhere else to run. That's when Jesus, with His compassionate love, opened my eyes and heart. He helped me realize I could run to Him, follow Him, and trust Him to transform my life. Let's run to Jesus like Peter did, for He gives us worth and makes us "Fishers of Men."

Peter's story is a reminder that no matter how unworthy we feel, Jesus calls us to follow Him. The moment Peter left his boat and nets, his life changed forever. He learned to rely on Jesus and allowed that love to transform him into a bold leader. It's the same for us. When we stop running away and instead run toward Jesus, our lives take on a new, eternal purpose.

Reflection and Tools to Apply:

Reflect on Luke 5:1-11: How did Peter respond to Jesus' call? What can you learn from his willingness to leave everything behind?

Meditate on God's Love: Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the compassionate love of the Heavenly Father to you.

Ask These Questions: Who in your life needs to feel worthy again? Who needs to experience the love of Jesus through you?

Take Practical Steps: Write down one action you can take to share God's love with someone who feels lost or unworthy.

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." (Matthew 4:19)

2. Help! I'M Sinking

Matthew 14:22–36

Peter was so excited to be called out by Jesus, but when he realized the storm was all around him, he became frightened. The interesting part is that after he became scared and started sinking, he immediately cried out for the Lord's help. Without hesitation, Jesus was there, lifting him up out of the water. How did you first meet Jesus? I mean really meet Him? I can remember my first real encounter. I was so excited! In fact, I told God to please call me out to the ministry field. I wanted to go wherever Jesus wanted me.

And sure enough, He did! But in the middle of ministry, I began to sink. I felt like everything was falling apart. I was scared; it was my weak point; I could not hold myself up any longer. It was then that I knew I had to cry out to Jesus to lift me back up. And He was right there, waiting for me to ask. He answered immediately, according to His perfect timing. He will do the same for you. Whether you are knee-deep in sin, stress, or both, just call on the name of the Lord.

After Peter was lifted out of the water, they went ashore, and Peter experienced Jesus perform miracles. And so can we! The storms we face often reveal our weaknesses and remind us of our need for Jesus. His power is made perfect in our weakness, and when we cry out to Him,

He rescues us with a love that never fails.

Peter's story reminds us that our fear and doubt don't disqualify us from experiencing God's miracles. In fact, they can draw us closer to Him. When we call on Jesus in our storms, we not only find relief but also grow in faith as we witness His transformative power.

Reflection and Tools to Apply:
Reflect on Matthew 14:22-36: When have you felt overwhelmed by a storm in your life? How did you respond? What can you learn from Peter's reaction?

Identify Your Storms: Write down any situations where you feel like you're sinking. Pray over each one, asking Jesus for His guidance and help.

Focus on Miracles: Reflect on past moments where you've seen God work in your life. How did those miracles strengthen your faith?

Practical Step: If you're in a storm right now, take time to pray and surrender your fears to Jesus. Trust that His timing and response are perfect.

"Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?'" (Matthew 14:31)

3. 7Th Heaven

Luke 9:28–36

When Peter realized what was going on, he quickly became lost in the holiness of the situation. He felt it necessary to stay in it as long as possible. In fact, he wanted to make camp there. He wanted to dwell in the awesomeness of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Wouldn't you want the same? I would! But God came down with a revelation for Peter and the others to hear.

He said, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him" (Luke 9:35).

What does this mean? I went through a Christian discipleship school for men and women who struggle with types of addictions. We would have some of the most intense spiritual worship nights. The experience was so awesome! If you came from a lifestyle that was leading you straight towards death's doors, and God saved you from that and brought you to a place of Transfiguration, well, you would be praising your little heart out too. The men and I would never want to leave the worship service. Because after leaving, it meant "Back to Work"—raising money for the ministry, planning outreaches, and keeping the facilities clean.

God told Peter and the others to listen to Him, listen to Jesus. And Jesus was pretty much saying (if He were using words), "No Peter, we cannot stay in the '7th heaven' world." There is work to be done down in the valley.

The world needs us. As a church, we cannot just stay in the "7th Heaven" spot, receiving. But we must take what we have experienced with Jesus and apply it by giving ourselves to the work at hand. We must fulfill the needs of the lost.
That is where the real fulfillment is.

Peter's mountaintop experience reminds us that spiritual moments of awe are not an end but a preparation for action. God's call is always outward, pushing us to share His love with the world. Transformation is not only for us—it's for others to see and experience through us.

Reflection and Tools to Apply:
Reflect on Luke 9:28-36: Have you ever experienced a spiritual "mountaintop" moment? How did it prepare you for the work ahead?

Apply Romans 12:2: Transformation begins with renewing your mind. Ask God to show you how to apply your spiritual experiences to everyday life.

Practical Action: Identify one way you can serve others this week, taking what you've received from Jesus and using it to meet a need.

Prayer Focus: Pray for a heart that listens to Jesus and for the courage to take His love into the "valleys" of life.

"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him." (Luke 9:35)

4. Wash My Feet! Boss

John 13:1–17

I love this story! It shows Peter's early character at its best. He really put his own "Foot in his mouth" (an old American phrase for speaking before thinking). Here Jesus is humbling Himself, setting a perfect example for His disciples. And Peter, in his self-proclamation of unworthiness, exaggerated the washing of his feet. He asked Jesus to practically give him a whole bath. He might as well have asked, "Where's the bubbles?"

But seriously, Peter had been following Jesus for a couple of years now. So the unworthiness he was feeling was not about being in His presence, like on the boat when Jesus called him and the others to be fishers of men. I believe it was fear of leadership (read verses 13-16). Jesus was their "Lord" and "Teacher." In other words, their "Leader." And He gave them an example to follow. Maybe Peter felt unworthy to be the leader that Jesus called him to be.

What about us? It's okay for the next person to try and be that leader, but we might think, "I don't have the skills, the personality, the passion." I'm good with just serving every now and then when I have the time. You know, even Paul, who wrote more than half of the New Testament, felt unworthy to be a leader, let alone the 13th apostle (read 1 Corinthians 15:9). He persecuted the church and helped kill good, God-fearing, Jesus-loving people.

We are called to be leaders and set the best example possible, with God's help. What is holding you back? Sin? You are already forgiven. Unworthiness? I am sure you can do more than just fish. Jesus loves you and is very proud of you and me. Stop running away from the leader in you, and run into a world of humble leadership.

Reflection and Tools to Apply:
Reflect on John 13:1-17: How does Jesus' example of washing His disciples' feet challenge your view of leadership?

Consider Leadership as Influence: Who is influencing you in a godly way? Follow their lead. Who are you influencing?

Practical Action: Identify one way you can practice servant leadership this week. It could be as simple as offering to help someone in need.

Pray for Humility and Boldness: Ask God to help you embrace humble leadership and step into the calling He has for you.

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28)

5. Ups & Downs

John 18:15–18, 25–27; John 21:15–19

Life is full of ups and downs. In Peter's life, there seemed to be a lot of them. At this particular time, Peter was having a very bad day! First, he sees Jesus getting arrested. And in his anger, he cuts off someone's ear! If that were not enough, he denies any acknowledgment of who Jesus was to him. He was under pressure! Aahh!! Freak Out Time!! Peter, it seems, nearly had a nervous breakdown. It says that after hearing the rooster crow, "He went out and wept bitterly" (read Matthew 26:75).

Have you ever betrayed a friendship? Have you ever been betrayed? I have been in both situations. How about when family members hold grudges? Now that is horrible! But the all-time worst is betrayal in the church. Those situations seem to last the longest and cause the most damage. It has happened to my family, and our church life was ruined for many years. But Jesus does not hold grudges. He forgives and forgets! So why is it so hard for us to do the same? Maybe it's because we "Lean on our own understanding." We trust in our own wisdom to handle a situation.

Read Proverbs 3:5-7. In short, this passage is saying to acknowledge God and not be wise in your own eyes. In fact, later on, after Jesus was resurrected, He went and looked for His friends, the disciples. He blessed them with a whole lot of fish after they had caught nothing the whole night before. And He grilled up some of the fish for them to eat together. The crazy part is how Jesus showed His forgiveness and acceptance of Peter. Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him three times (read John 21:15-19).

I had a teenager break into our youth club to steal our cafe money for drugs. Instead of just feeling betrayed and holding a grudge, we showed him that we forgave him and still loved him by letting him know that he was still welcome in the club and that if he needed anything to call.

We must continuously try to treat everyone with a forgiving and accepting heart. We cannot do this if we are running away from our problems, feeling betrayed. But we must try and run to our problems with a forgiving and accepting heart, with God's wisdom, and with the eyes of Jesus.

Reflection and Tools to Apply:
Reflect on John 18:15-18, 25-27; John 21:15-19: What can Peter's story teach you about forgiveness and grace?
Practical Forgiveness: Identify one broken relationship in your life. Pray for God's help to forgive or seek forgiveness.

Live Gracefully: Think of one person who has wronged you recently. Take a step to show them grace and acceptance, just as Jesus showed Peter.

Scripture to Meditate On: Proverbs 3:5-6. Ask God to help you trust Him instead of leaning on your own understanding.

“Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:13)

6. Full Speed Ahead

Acts 2

After Jesus left the world, He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. Upon receiving this gift, all the disciples received boldness to go out and do what God called them to do. Peter, I believe, felt compelled to take charge! After all, Jesus said Peter would be the “Rock” on which He would build His church.

Peter took the “Initiative” to fulfill the prophecy in the book of Psalms (69:25) about finding an Apostle replacement for Judas with Matthias (read Acts 1:15-26). Then after receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter, with the eleven disciples, preached the gospel for the very first time (I would have loved to be there for that!). Because of this, the fellowship of believers was created, which became the first church.

He did all of this before he even went on his first journey! There was great persecution against the first church, scattering the fellowship to different parts of Israel. One of the places was an area named Samaria. One of the men who fled the persecution was Philip, who preached the Word of God there.

It says when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard this, they sent Peter and John there also. When they came, they began to pray for those there so that they would receive the Holy Spirit. I tell you all this, mainly for one reason: Initiative.

Even before Peter went on his first journey, he knew something needed to be done to help make known this awesome gift of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He wasn’t sure what exactly to do. In fact, all he and the others knew was to come together in prayer and wait for God’s gift, the Holy Spirit.

When I came back to Christ and wanted to devote my life to His calling, I was confused too. I didn’t know what direction to go. So I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to be my guide. That is what Peter and the others did!
I wanted to know what kind of journey I would be taking. So I got ready and kept serving God while preparing. Everything I did while waiting for my journey prepared and equipped me for my journey. And again, that is what happened to Peter and the others!

If we really want to be used by God—if we really want to go on a journey with Jesus—then we must take the Initiative. God will not force us to do anything, because the Holy Spirit is not a slave driver! If you are confused about which way to go, use the gift God has given you: the Holy Spirit. He is your guide. Don’t wait around for the journey to begin. Do something while you are waiting. It all starts by taking the Initiative.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...” (Colossians 3:23)

Reflection and Tools to Apply:
Reflect on Acts 2: How did the disciples respond to the Holy Spirit’s leading? How does this inspire you to take initiative in your own life?

Identify Your Gifts: Write down the talents, opportunities, or spiritual gifts God has given you. How can you use them to bring Heaven on earth?

Take Practical Action: Choose one area in your life where you can take initiative this week. Begin with prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Trust in the Process: Remember, preparation is part of the journey. Seek God's wisdom as you wait and act in faith.

"The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." (Luke 12:12)

7. Road Trip

Acts 10

I love road trips! You get so much out of them. They are filled with experiences that you remember for a lifetime. You meet the coolest people, sometimes the weirdest. You learn so much about yourself and others.
Well, Peter was on his second journey (or “Road Trip”), and I guarantee he was having all kinds of different experiences. He healed a paralytic, brought a woman back to life, and if that were not enough, he was receiving visions from heaven. (Now that is what I call a “Road Trip”!)

But the thing I want us to recognize is Peter’s willingness to learn from others. I hate going on trips just as a tourist. But I love to go on trips where I have a contact (native) to meet up with. You learn so much more about the area you are in. Even if I don’t have a contact, I go with the openness to meet others that are from there. It makes the trip much more memorable and exciting. In fact, I show no prejudice towards whom I would like to meet.

Now Peter found a place to stay with some man who lived by the sea! WOW! Talk about being lavished with blessings! Peter was what we like to say in Cali (California), “Living Large!” Then he gets a vision from heaven expressing that all food is clean when God makes it clean. Jews have been known to be very picky about their food. So Peter had to have this vision repeated three times before he finally got the message (I think three is Peter’s favorite number?!).

At the end of the vision, Peter was told to go with three non-Jews, to a non-Jewish house. Again, Jews are also known to be picky about who they socialize with (at least in Bible times). But Peter kept an open mind and went. When he reached his destination, he started to realize what his vision really meant: “All people that God makes clean, are clean.”

Read Acts 10:34-35. God does not show favoritism. And neither should we. Peter allowed himself to be... “Teachable.” On our journey of not “Running Away” but “Running To,” we must also be “Teachable.” We never know when a certain experience with a certain person is going to teach us something.

Peter went on his journey with an open mind and a teachable heart. He not only helped others to receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit, but he also learned not to show favoritism. All because he chose not to run away from an unfamiliar situation. Instead, he ran straight to it. On our life-long journey (Road Trip), no matter what the situation is, we must try and be... “Teachable.”

“A servant of the Lord must not argue. Instead, he must be kind to everyone, teachable, willing to suffer wrong,” (2 Timothy 2:24).

Reflection and Tools to Apply:
Reflect on Acts 10: What is God teaching you right now through your current experiences? How are you responding to it?

Embrace a Teachable Spirit: Identify one area in your life where you've resisted change or learning. Pray for openness and humility.

Take Action: Think of someone different from you—culturally, socially, or spiritually. Find a way to learn from them this week.

Scripture for Meditation: Reflect on 2 Timothy 2:24 and ask God for kindness and a teachable heart as you encounter new situations and people.

"All people that God makes clean, are clean."
(Acts 10:34-35)

8. And... Action!

Galatians 2:11–21

In a typical Hollywood action film, the bad guy usually dies at the end of the movie and everyone lives happily ever after. I like to look at “sin” as the bad guy. Peter had a bad guy in his life. His bad guy’s name was “denial.” Jesus, before leaving Earth, helped Peter kill his bad guy.

Unfortunately, by his own doing, his bad guy did not stay dead like in the Hollywood films. He brought it back to life and denied his Gentile friends equal opportunity. When Peter was around certain people, he fell to pressure, like before, and his bad guy of “denying” came back to life.

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is gone and the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).
I live by that scripture. Remembering this scripture gives me strength to keep going forward.

Unfortunately, we will not be perfect until Jesus comes for us. So like Peter, some of my bad guys keep coming back, trying to ruin the end of my film.

Peter did not surrender to his bad guy of 'denial'. He realized, with the help of good friends and Jesus’ mercy, that God’s grace was too big to show favoritism but that this grace was and is for all who accept it.

James 1:6 says... “he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” Peter in his weakness realized who he was in Christ and became... “Immovable.”

In our weaknesses, our failures, our sin, we must remember who we are in Christ: a new creation. The devil tried and tried again to move Peter from his calling but could not! Peter was used by Jesus to be the “Rock” upon which He built the church. Jesus is the “Rock” on which we build our lives.

We must profess this in our lives. We will not be tossed around like the ocean’s waves and by the wind. But we will be... “Immovable.”

Peter and the other apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29)

Reflection and Tools to Apply:
Reflect on 2 Corinthians 5:17: Meditate on what it means to be a new creation in Christ. How does this truth impact your daily decisions?

Identify Your "Bad Guy": What sin or struggle keeps coming back in your life? Bring it before God in prayer and seek His mercy and grace.

Strengthen Your Foundation: Spend time in scripture and prayer, asking God to make you immovable in your faith.

Take Action: Share your testimony of transformation with someone this week to encourage them in their walk with Christ.

“We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29)

9. Wrapping It Up

Hebrews 12:1

Hebrews 12:1 says, “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” If you are tired of "Running Away" from the uncomfortable situations, unfamiliar experiences, God’s calling on your life, or even just from yourself, then start "Running To" in a different direction – into the arms of Jesus.

He will strengthen you to finish the race and receive the prize (read Philippians 3:14). But we must show "initiative”.

James 4:8 says, “Come near to God and He will come near to you.” Not the other way around. No matter where we are at in our journey, we need to have the mentality that we can learn if we want to move forward. We must be "teachable”.

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge but fools despise wisdom and discipline.” Finally, we must remember that we are on the winning team if we choose to live for Christ. He has made us into a new creation. He is our “Rock!”

Psalms 18:2 says, “My God is my Rock in whom I take refuge.” We must proclaim that we are "immovable”!

I end this part of the journey not with my own words, but with God’s Word through Peter:

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever.” (2 Peter 3:18)

AMEN

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