In “Emmaus Witnessing: Trauma and the Disordering of the Theological Imagination,” Jones explores the issues of trauma as it pertains both to the individual and society at large, and how it causes its victims to be mentally stuck in the experiences of the traumatic event. In response to horrific tragedies, society comes up with “stories” to understand the hardships, but they do not completely address the issues and in some cases cause more trauma. Instead, Jones argues that Christians need to offer the reconstruction of the trauma story in the context of the fall and redemption found in the scriptures.

In the beginning of the essay, Jones explains the symptoms of trauma and how she personally carried those symptoms during the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, illustrating how significant and impactful trauma is and why it needs to be addressed. She states four common symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: constant stress, being mentally unable to stop reliving the trauma, difficulty in approaching the subject, and “withdrawal.” (Jones 116). Later in the paper, Jones heavily emphasizes the second symptom, probably because it produces a never-ending stream of trauma. Furthermore, to emphasize the gravity of the consequences, she recounted her own experience, where she expressed symptoms of PTSD, including the first especially. She writes of how hard it was to write this essay when she was “still cowering, in a sense, waiting for more violence to come” (Jones 113). By including her own emotions on such a recent event, she shows rather than simply tells of the pains and hurt trauma causes. Furthermore, she argues that trauma has a ripple effect, where the persons not immediately affected by the trauma can still suffer, since society at large is affected (117). With the widespread affect of trauma and her personal raw experiences, Jones effectively demonstrates the need for a solution to the devastating consequences of trauma.

Considering the atrocities and pains of trauma, Jones describes three ways society at large has produced several coping methods: emphasizing the good in humanity, placing trust and pride in one’s country’s ideals (freedom and democracy for America), and attempting to forget the trauma through comedy (121). All three fail to properly address the problem, with the patriotic view causing the want to strike back and the escapist view with comedy does merely wets the appetite with surface level happiness for the real meat of justice and understanding. As a result, she argues these two views cause more trauma, as extreme patriotism would lead to armed conflicts, and escapist comedy wouldn’t offer any beneficial change, leaving the experience loop of trauma not paused.

In response to the tragedy of trauma, Jones argues that a role of the church is to help victims understand their trauma in the light of the fall and redemption found in the scriptures. Because one of the ways to recover from trauma is sharing the trauma with others and then focusing on creating a better future story, Jones believes that Christians first need to acknowledge and listen to the pains this world experiences (120,121). Once the traumatic event is heard, then the work of fitting the story into the bigger story of the scriptures occurs; what was once a story of only despair becomes a story that illustrates the fall, but then later the hope of the resurrection and redemption of Christ. Just as Jesus listened to the horrific tragedies the disciples believed to have witnessed on the way to Emmaus, Jones argues that Christians need to listen. In the same way that Jesus reiterates their false account to match and fit in with the Biblical story of “Moses and the prophets,” Christians are expected to show victims how their story makes sense when it is seen with the rest of history. However, Jones admits in the end that there is no perfect recovery from trauma. She quotes Langer, who believes that once someone is affected by trauma, he is always affected.

In her conclusion, she emphasizes on Jesus saying, “Peace be with you,” hoping that readers will take action to work towards addressing trauma and encouraging peace.