

# Casting Your Cares

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Today's scriptures come from 1 Peter 5, verses 6-11, and John 17, verses 6-19.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. And now John, chapter 17, verses 6-19. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.

[ 1 : 19 ] They were yours. You gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them.

I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world. I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction, so that the scripture would be fulfilled.

[ 2 : 25 ] I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Y'all make me nervous when y'all get this quiet.

I don't know if something's going on or what. All right. I think some of y'all just locked up because y'all get nervous when y'all see props. So let's pray together. Almighty and gracious God, we give you thanks for this moment and this time.

[ 3 : 34 ] As we have come to you together, singing praises, praying together, and listening to your word. Now with our hearts ready, Lord, plant a seed in each of us.

A seed that will grow and bear fruit for the honor and the glory of your name. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. Amen. So, our key verse today, if those of you who have your Bibles with you want to get there, our primary verse we're going to be talking about today is from 1 Peter, chapter 5, and it's verse 7.

1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 7. You heard Bill read it, and it's on the cover of your bulletin, or at least part of it is. It says, cast your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

Cast your anxieties on him. Some translations use cast your cares, which is what's the title of the message, and that's what's on your bulletin. Before we get into our conversation today, I want to say a clear word about anxiety.

Excuse me. Now, the American Psychological Association defines anxiety as an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure.

[ 5 : 03 ] People with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. The reason why I'm bringing this up is we want to be clear about what we're talking about.

Okay? Because we can talk about anxiety from the sort of everyday cares and concerns we confront, but we are seeing an increased level of anxiety in our society, and it is really a concern.

And quite frankly, friends, it is killing us. And I want to be clear that if you are experiencing anxiety to the level where it is impeding your ability to function, in other words, when you have something coming up and you start to feel certain physical symptoms, like increased stomach upset, your blood pressure goes up, or you sweat excessively, if you have some mental symptoms where you have this sort of dread, and it causes you to do things like when you pull up in a place and not want to get out of your car, if you start to put things off and you say, well, I'll deal with that when I'm ready, and you start to avoid things to that degree, friends, hear me and hear me well.

There is absolutely no shame in seeking the professional help those things warrant. Please do. Because as I said, this is killing us.

And if you find yourself confronting anxiety to that degree, please seek professional help. And if you are afraid to do that on your own, please contact the church and we will walk with you.

[ 6 : 41 ] We are not mental health professionals. We don't pretend to be. But we will guide you to the folk who have the appropriate expertise. That said, let's again hear our verse of the day.

Cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. Now, what I want us to spend our time focused on today is what does that really mean for the everyday person walking through life?

Because that could get real churchy, right? And it also could be real superficial. Because, you know, I could do that sort of cheap pastor thing and just say, well, let's just pray about it.

I don't want to be that dude. Okay? Because we are going to talk about praying about it, but we want to talk about it from a different place. Okay? And so let's talk about life for a second.

All right? The reason why I brought the props today is I want you to think of each of these as a life situation. So you got this little glass here, right? And you got the pitcher.

[ 7 : 44 ] And of course, you got the bucket. Now, this could be a situation that doesn't bring a whole lot out of you. Right? So something happens.

Like you have to go in and talk to your boss about something. Right? And that could bring certain feelings out of you. Okay? Now, for some folks, that may be even more of a problem.

Right? Because, say, that you've kind of been on thin ice with that supervisor. Maybe you missed a project or they weren't happy with the last thing you did. So the thought of having a conversation with them brings up some stronger feelings.

Right? And then maybe let's just call it what it is. Maybe your boss is a jerk. Right? And so the thought of going in and knowing that you didn't do something right or you need some time off or something, you are carrying around a whole lot with the thought of having to talk to them.

Okay? Now, the reason why I bring this up is because you notice how one thing can bring out different levels of anxiety. Right? And even if we talked about it in that kind of general sense, like it can hit you in different ways.

[ 9 : 01 ] Now, imagine this with different life situations. Because for some, the going in to talk to the boss can be a little thing. While for others, it can be a huge thing.

Say it turns into something like a serious medical diagnosis. Well, you're carrying around an awful lot. Maybe it's the loss of someone who's precious to you.

Again, carrying around a big thing. But this is what I want us to think about. Because it doesn't all hit us all the same way. And even if we talk about things from that point of view, we've got a name that we all kind of deal with these moments in different ways.

But the key piece is that we all experience anxiety. And all anxiety isn't inherently a bad thing. It's a normal physiological and psychological response to stimuli.

For example, if you've got a test coming up and you haven't studied yet and you know you need to study and your body starts feeling them little things, then that's not inherently a bad thing.

[ 10 : 11 ] Now, if you've got a test coming up and you know you haven't studied yet and it starts to send you to the bathroom and you start to throw up because you're so stressed about it, that's the kind of anxiety where you might need to see somebody.

Okay? That's what we're talking about. But the thing is we all hit these different levels. We all hit these different ways. And even though we're talking about different types of life circumstances, right, I want you to think about this piece.

Now, I've got this glass of water here. And we would think, well, this is not really that big a thing. But the problem that comes up is, well, even this little glass, if I just gave it to one of you and I said, well, hold this.

And then you had to hold it for, say, an hour or six or a week. then all of a sudden, you start to see that it's a problem.

And what happens if you've got to carry this with you while you're trying to do other things in life? Like, hold this glass while you go into the kitchen and prepare a meal.

[ 11 : 30 ] Hold this glass while you drive from here downtown and don't spill any. Hold this glass while you mow the lawn. Okay?

You see what I'm getting at? While it might not be a big thing initially, if you've got to carry it with you while you're trying to function and do these other things, it will impact you.

And that's where we've got to have this conversation. Because, as I said, we are dealing with this sort of epidemic of understanding anxiety in our society.

Because with the pandemic, with our political climate, with any number of issues that are out here in the world, people are dealing with a lot.

And because we are dealing with a lot, in addition to those life circumstances that just hit each of our individual lives, we've heard some of them in the prayer concerns. Right?

[ 12 : 31 ] People are dealing with these things. And it doesn't help us at all if we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, think that we can just walk through life and not say that our faith makes any difference in how we deal with any of this.

What would make someone say, well, I want to understand that Jesus a little more if, when I'm dealing with stuff like this, it means nothing.

But see, that's not our faith. That's not who we are. We know that God is in this with us.

And because we know that, because we understand that, the challenge then becomes, well, how do we do this well? How do I actually take a step forward in these life circumstances when stuff starts hitting me and it starts to feel like too much?

That's where we want to spend our time today. So, again, you hear the verse, right? Cast your cares upon him because he cares for you.

[ 13 : 49 ] Now, let's remember the setting here because we've talked about it every week as we've gone through the series. Remember that 1 Peter is a letter that was written to a group of churches who are primarily new in faith.

And so, these believers are struggling with the changes that they're making in life. They're struggling with the fact that some of the people around them see them differently and that they don't fit in like they used to fit in and some of their relationships are compromised a little bit and they're struggling with, well, what is it I actually believe?

What does it mean to follow Jesus? And so, they're dealing with some of this. Their relationships are weird and they're starting to bump heads with each other in this kind of chaos in their church.

And so, they're trying to figure all this out. And then, Peter writes this letter to them. Now, he lays out some basics of what it means to believe. We've talked about a few of those verses but then we get to this one and we're in the last chapter of the book now.

And Peter's laid out some things about relationships. That's actually kind of a challenging part of the Bible, right? Because some things get said in there that are easy to misinterpret but that could be a whole sermon series in and of itself.

[ 15 : 03 ] But after he wraps up this piece with youth respecting elders, for example, we come here. And so, if you're with me, we're in 1 Peter. We're going to start at verse 6.

Chapter 5, verse 6. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

So that's the setting, right? We've just walked through all of this and so that's what Peter's advice is. So, I want you to think for a minute about some anxiety you might be carrying.

The things in life that may be hitting you right now. The challenge then becomes, what does it mean to cast my anxiety on him? Because that sounds good and I say my prayers every day.

So, am I not doing it right? I don't think it's a question of whether you're doing it right. Let's see if we can't maybe take it further. Okay? So, when most of us have a thing, we spend a lot of our time praying about the thing.

[ 16 : 11 ] That is not bad. That is not wrong. So, for example, if someone you love is sick and they're in the hospital, you say, well, I would like X to get better.

Absolutely nothing wrong with that. Absolutely nothing wrong with that. But here's the piece where we might take an additional step. The problem that I think we miss when we pray for things like that is if X, this person we're talking about, is somebody you care about.

And you, quite frankly, are scared. Right? Because this is a serious thing. And you love this person, you're not sure what the diagnosis is going to be or what the prognosis is going to be, and you have all these feelings around it.

Now, when you pray for X to get better, the assumption is that if X gets better, problem solved. which is true on a certain level.

Okay? But what we have not talked to God about is all that emotional stuff that comes with the situation.

[ 17 : 31 ] and so, if you are carrying around a lot of fear and worry because of your loved one in the hospital and you've prayed for their health and you've prayed for them to heal, again, that is a right, good, thing you should do.

But what you've left out is all this other stuff that's sitting right on top of your chest. and you've kind of assumed that when God takes care of the situation, this will just go away.

Like, we just expect the poof thing from God, right? We do. We expect the poof. Come on, y'all. Let's be real. Right? Come on. It's okay.

You're safe. Right? When we say, for those of you not up on speaking, Pastor Scott, here's what I mean. The poof thing is when we say, God, I would like X to get better and you expect God to poof and he will get up out of the bed.

Okay? We expect the poof thing. And, I don't know about you, now, I have seen God do the poof thing, but that is rare in my walk with Jesus.

[ 18 : 45 ] Okay? It's okay, y'all. You're safe with me. If you've had 100% poof rate, great for you. I have not had that. And because most of us have not had that, what we then start to deal with is, well, God, why isn't he better yet?

Why did you do this to me, God? He's a good dude. Why is he sick? And again, all this stuff starts swirling around.

And it sits squarely on your chest. And that's on top of the fact of what's actually happening to your friend. And when those things get caught up, when you start to have all those feelings, what are you doing with that?

What are you doing with that? And that's the piece that I think we want to take the step forward into today. And when you hear the language, cast your anxiety on him, are you actually doing that?

Are you giving God those things you are struggling with in addition to the actual thing you're praying about? because if you're caught up in those feelings and you never deal with those feelings, then that becomes really dangerous territory.

[ 20 : 22 ] Right? Because hear what Peter says next. I'm going to start again at verse 7. And hear what Peter says after it. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Resist him, standing firm in the faith because you know the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. Those things are not together randomly.

Right? So, if you're dealing with you got all them feelings. Right? You got all your stresses. You got all your sadness. All your frustration.

All your anger. In addition to the situation you're up against. And you haven't been honest with God about that. Here's the thing where this gets dangerous. You see, we sometimes keep our theology and our understanding of God at this really basic level.

[ 21 : 26 ] And so, what some of the stuff we'll do is, well, maybe the devil put X in the bed. that is overly simplistic and most likely wrong. Okay?

And when we say it's overly simplistic, it's because we're giving the devil too much credit. We really are. We're giving the devil way too much credit. But here's where the devil really does his best work.

Because those feelings sitting on your chest, when you start to go, God, why did you do that? And you're mad at God and you're angry with God. That's when that little voice whispers in your ear, see, I told you God didn't care about you.

You see, God doesn't listen to your prayers. Who you think that is? And that's the danger.

God doesn't have any power. Because Satan doesn't have any real power. What Satan can do is he can cause you to decide to walk away from God.

[ 22 : 43 ] He will never win the battle with God directly. But if Satan's goal is to make you miserable, and if Satan wants to hurt God by taking his children away, the only way he does that is you consciously start backing up.

And that starts to happen when those things that are sitting on your chest go unaddressed. Because those are the doors he can make his way into.

And the question is, if you don't deal with those things, if you don't name that, give that to God, then you are ripe.

You are sitting right there. And he can say, I told you so. That's why Peter says that.

He looks for those opportunities. And when we give them to him, he'll jump right in there. But that's why the first piece we said is so important.

[ 24 : 00 ] When you cast your anxieties on God, when you lean into God in those moments, he can't do anything. Because you're holding on to the right source of strength.

You're holding on to the person who can actually help you shoulder this heavy burden. You're actually going where you need to go in order to deal with it properly.

Remember, it's not just Peter who said this. You heard Bill read this today in that prayer that Jesus says. John 17 is what scholars call Jesus' high priestly prayer.

He prays this before he goes to the Garden of Gethsemane. And when he is saying this, I want you to hear these words again, right? Because he's thinking about us.

He's thinking about us. Not only the disciples that are in the room, he's thinking about us. Okay? And so when you hear him saying these things, remember, he's got you in mind.

[ 25 : 04 ] I have revealed you, the Father, to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours. You gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word.

Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

All I have is yours, and all you have is mine, and glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name that you gave me.

[ 26 : 11 ] None has been lost, except the one doomed to destruction, so that scripture will be fulfilled. Now lock in even closer and hear what he's saying to you. I'm coming to you now, but I say these things while I'm still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is the truth. even Jesus is trying to get us to hear that warning, right?

That it's because as we walk this life, life is going to happen. It's unavoidable, right?

And we get distracted by these things saying, well, you know, if God really loved me, this wouldn't happen to me, and I can't follow a God that would do these bad things. Who do you think is the originator of those lies?

[ 27 : 31 ] But we start to buy into that stuff. And when we start to buy into that stuff, what we are doing is consciously backing away from the one who is trying to reach us, the one who is here to help us in these moments.

Yet, what we are choosing to do is say, you know what? If God really loved me, this wouldn't happen. And what Peter has done is turn the lie on its head. Because what we have heard whispered in our ear by the world is that if God really was who he says he is, or if God really loved you, you wouldn't be going through this.

But what Peter is saying is, cast your cares on God because he cares for you. In other words, if you want to understand the care of God, if you want to understand the comfort of God, if you want to understand the provision of God, if you want to understand the strength of God, when these things show up, lean into God and let God be God.

As opposed to thinking, well, I just got to carry this stuff around myself. Who's going to help me? See, that's unearthing the lie.

If we are going to be who we profess to be, if we are going to walk through this world and show the world people who can testify to a living hope that when these moments hit, where will you find your guidance?

[ 29 : 13 ] Where will you find your strength? Where will you find what it means to walk the way God wants us to walk? You certainly are going to find it moving away from God.

You find it by going further into God. In other words, you cast your cares on him. That's how you get through them. And again, that doesn't mean don't do the smart things.

That doesn't mean don't do the earthly things. Sometimes God's response to prayer is painfully practical. Say that ten times fast. Sometimes God's response to prayer is painfully practical.

Why did I write that? I could have done that better. But let's say that again. Sometimes God's response to prayer makes perfect common sense. That's easier. Okay?

Here's what I mean. If you are sick and you say, God, help me, maybe God's response is, go to the doctor. Never so that short, guys.

[ 30 : 27 ] But y'all thought I was kidding about that poof thing, didn't you? What do you think that looks like in real life? But that's what we're dealing with.

Right? that when you lean into God and God says, I got you. I'll help you carry this thing. Really.

But we have to be open. We have to listen. And let's be even more practical. I'm going to hit my three same notes that I hit all the time when it comes to how do we do this for real.

First is, you go to God. God, you pray. And you pray the things that we just talked about praying. Not only pray for the situation and the object, but get that stuff off your chest.

If you want a good model for that, look at Jesus in Gethsemane. That's about as real and raw a prayer you will ever see. And this is Jesus we're talking about. Because Jesus is like, hey, dude, can we do something else?

[ 31 : 34 ] And he prays so hard that people who are far away from him can see sweat dripping off of him. Y'all know that I go to that all the time. Because it's like, I don't know the last time you broke a sweat when you were praying.

Right? But that's how real and raw Jesus was with his prayer. How about you? Okay? Secondly, go to the word. Listen to what God has promised you.

Listen to what our biblical heroes go through. You will find that they have plenty of real and raw moments. That we tend to think that we got to be all nice and neat and prim and proper.

When in fact, the Bible is full of people who are the exact opposite of that. So why do we buy into that myth? God can handle your real and raw.

He gave it to you. And when you think about the people who love you the most, the people you're the closest to, they see you in your realest and rawest moments.

[ 32 : 35 ] Why do you think Jesus can't take that? And he loves you more than they do. So don't be afraid to be real and raw with Jesus. Lastly, go to your village.

Go to your people. Right? That's everybody here. Go to your people. It's amazing sometimes that we forget that we have this village.

And when you are having a bad day, go to your people. Right? I have friends I know that if I am overly tempted or if I am breaking down or if I am struggling, that simple text message, guys, pray for me, I'm having a bad day.

Or we can get on the phone. We do it for each other. These friends mean the world to me because that's what everybody needs.

Go to your people. Right? You don't have to suffer alone. But we often choose to because growing up in our country, one of the main cultural things we are taught is to be self-sufficient, to be independent, to be strong.

[ 33 : 44 ] Those are good things. But you are not meant to carry every weight and you certainly aren't meant to carry weights this heavy by yourself.

God did not build us to do life without him. Hear that again. God did not build us to do life without him. And yet that's exactly what most of us choose to do.

And we wonder why it's so hard. So friends, whatever these things may be for you right now, hear the lesson.

cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. Amen and amen.

Loving and gracious God, we give you thanks that you are who you are, that you love us in the ways that you do, that we don't suffer in silence and we don't suffer alone, that no matter what the weight is we carry, you are ready to shoulder it with us, we just have to ask, that we don't have to ignore or bury our feelings, that we simply need to share them with you, that whatever we are facing, however many burdens we may be carrying, however many balls in the air we may be trying to juggle, nothing is too big or too complicated for you.

[ 35 : 24 ] Lord God we give you thanks that you love us this much, that even though the enemy will try to whisper things into our ears, your truth stands unshakable and unmovable, let us stand in it, let us trust it, and let us live in it, so that those who are in the world who do not know will come to see the difference you make, in Jesus most holy name, amen.

During communion today, some folks may be having some things on their mind, some folks may be burdened in some way, if you want to stop at the altar rail, I will be there to pray with you today, that if you want to put something down, if you want to cast a care on God, I will be there to help you with it, so don't be afraid, don't be ashamed, that if you want someone to pray with you, you have a chance today.

And amen. It's been a powerful day, y'all. As we consider the ways in which we might go into the world and share our faith this week, we have numerous donation opportunities if you have resources or time you want to give to help our ministries, they're all available in your bulletin.



Main thing I want to highlight is the information sessions that are coming up about what's going on in the UMC. We have one immediately after service today. We're going to be meeting in the choir room for those who are interested.

And so if you want to find out more about what that's all about, and you may have heard some things from friends in different churches or in different parts of the country, we are going to talk through what is happening and what is actually on the table.

[ 37 : 09 ] All that having been said, let's receive our benediction. in the name of God, our creator and king, and in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our savior, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, our comforter and our sustainer, may God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children.

Amen.