

Slaying the Dragon of Worry

Framing the Flock, Part 4

1 Peter 5:7

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

We don't have to be controlled by worry. It's easy to get caught up in the unknown and worry about what might happen tomorrow or the next day or sometime in the future. We cannot live in fear of what might happen tomorrow. What we can do is trust in the One who knows and has already sovereignly planned our lives. We waste our time worrying when we can be casting our burdens and worries onto the Lord and living in light of what He has called us to today. God is not surprised by any trial that we face. He knew about it beforehand, and He cares. He cares, and He knows what we need before we do.

Discussion Points:

The type of anxiety in this verse is one that "pulls you apart." It is the type of anxiety that causes one to lose sleep or feel sick or just overwhelmed.

- What are some areas in your life that you see this type of anxiety?
- What is the real issue when someone is overtaken with worry?
- In what ways has God given you victory over those areas?

Anxiety and worry are very real in today's society. Statistics show that the number of students facing anxiety and depression is steadily growing.

- Why do you think that number is growing?
- What do people typically turn to when they are overtaken with fear and anxiety?
- What are the benefits to casting our burdens onto the Lord?

We talked about last week how God will exalt us at just the right time. We must remain humble and trusting in the meantime.

- What is the typical response when a stressful or anxious situation arises?
- How does humility affect how we handle worry?
- If we truly are "under the mighty hand of God (and we are)," why do we still walk around with doubt and fear?

Discussion Guide Cont.

Until we see Jesus, we will face worry and trials every day. But those things don't have to take control.

- What are some effective ways to combat worry?
- How has God proven time and time again that He cares for us?
- What steps do you need to take to cast your worry onto the Lord?

Gospel Connection:

We cannot fully cast our burdens onto the Lord if we aren't surrendering our lives to Him. Like we talked about last week, we must humble ourselves before Him, admit that He is the only One who is truly in control, and believe He is who He says He is. He is good, all-knowing, all-powerful, merciful, just, gracious, sovereign, and so much more. We must believe that we are nothing without Him. We cannot cast our burdens onto someone in whom we have not fully believed or given our lives to. In humility, we believe and accept Him as our Savior. In humility, we cast our burdens onto the One who knows all things and truly cares about us.

Practical Implications:

Think: What areas of your life have anxiety and worry taken over? What areas of your life has God given you victory over worry? What areas of your life have you not cast onto Him?

Pray: Ask God daily and regularly for victory over the worry and anxiety in your life. Ask Him for peace and calm during the midst of a storm. Ask Him for the strength to carry on and be a blessing to others.

Do: Be thankful for the victory you have in Christ over worry. Be thankful that He is with you all the time. Don't be overtaken with anxiety. Do as Peter says, "Cast your burdens onto the Lord."

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The Lennox Globe is a unique one of a kind globe. It was crafted by the medieval cartographer in the early 1500's. After drawing on all the knowledge of the known world, the mapmaker wrote three words at the edges of the world as he knew it – and the three words, translated into English, are, “Here be dragons”.

Beyond the edges of what mankind knew about their world – all you could do was worry. There might as well be dragons lurking out there in the unseen and unexpected future.

- If you can't see it –
- If you don't know where it is and when it might come –
- If you can't overcome it –
- If you don't understand it –
- If it spells trouble or suffering or danger
- . . .

You might as well go ahead and write into the pages of your unknown future – Here be dragons. There's nothing you can do about it but worry.

Even though we know dragons aren't out there lurking at the edges of our Continents, that hasn't given the world's population any kind of antidote to end worry. In fact, there's always some kind of new dragon out there to create anxiety.

I did a little digging and found the results of new research proving that anxiety didn't stay put in the early 1500's; in fact it is on the rise today.

One news article compared children's fears with adult fears;

- Children fear doctors; adults fear doctor bills
- Children fear bad dreams; adults fear unfulfilled dreams

- Children fear clowns; well, adults fear clowns too

Studies among college students have historically shown depression to be the number one reason students sought counseling services. In the last year, according to the American College Health Association, depression has now been eclipsed by anxiety.

Thirty years ago, beginning in 1985, U.C.L.A. began asking incoming freshmen if they felt – quote – “completely overwhelmed with life” and in 1985, 18% said they did. By 2010, the number had increased to 29%, but today, the number is now at 41%.¹

Which is significant because college students are the demographic most excited about tackling life. Yet nearly one out of two are overwhelmed about the future.

Which led one popular author and blogger to write, “If you're a human being living in [the 21st century] and you're not anxious, there's something wrong with you.”ⁱⁱ

The truth is, no matter how old you are, you never outgrow the ability to be anxious . . . there's always a dragon of worry nearby that needs slaying.

One of the realities of the spiritual life that new believers, especially, are surprised to discover, is the simple fact that coming to Christ by faith alone, didn't automatically erase the dragons from the map of our thoughts . . . from the edges of our tomorrows.

If that were the case, Jesus would have never needed to deal with the subject of anxiety, as He did on several occasions.

The letters of the Apostles are also filled with exhortations to trust the providence of God; to trust His faithfulness and His ability to turn everything ultimately to our good.

If Christians were automatically vaccinated against the outbreak of anxiety, the Apostle Paul would never have commanded one of the most mature congregations we know of to not be anxious about anything (Philippians 4:6).

Slaying the dragon of anxiety – from the 1st century to the 21st century is a daily part of the Christian’s battle. And it must be fought daily by the believer.

Corrie Ten Boom, who survived the concentration camp at Ravensbruck in Germany during the final months of World War II, made the point this way when she would later write,

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.

Corrie ten Boom

In other words, worry doesn’t change anything about tomorrow, but it sure messes up your mind today.

It’s no surprise that the Apostle Peter would tackle the issue of worry. And he does so with one very strong, demanding, powerful, inspired text where he delivers an ultimatum and then an affirmation.

Turn back to Peter’s first letter and pick up the text where we left off, at **chapter 5 and verse 7**. This is all I want to deal with today . . . just this one freighted phrase.

First, I want you to notice the ultimatum from Peter.

The Ultimatum

Casting all your anxiety on Him . . .
1 Peter 5:7a

I need to point out first that this phrase is a part of the previous verse – notice **verse 6**, Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him. 1 Peter 5:6-7a

In other words, you’ve allowed yourself to be humbled by God and you recognize that His mighty hand is in control of everything in your life – and that He will, at just the right time (we studied in our last session) **exalt you** – that is:

- bring about that reversal of circumstances . . .
- that reversal in your difficulties or problems or sickness or pain or sorrow or whatever takes place
- whenever and wherever He chooses to reverse some of it.

It could be in this life, where there is a temporary reversal of misfortune and life gets easier; it could be in that coming day when there will be a permanent, eternal reversal and the cross will give way to the crown . . .

But in the meantime, as you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God’s purposes and providence, make sure you are **casting all your anxiety upon on Him**.

The word Peter uses for **anxiety** – merimna – means to be pulled apart – to be pulled in numerous directions.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Greek world used this word often to describe the cares of life that one might brood over; they wrote that these cares were the kind that disturbed your sleep . . . Greek philosophers wrote, “the foolish try to drown these in love or in drink; but only death can free us from these cares of life.”^{iv}

There wasn’t any solution for the unbeliever. The dragon of worry was virtually undefeatable.

But Peter here tells the believer – not so – don’t be pulled apart by anxiety. In fact, this is not a suggestion – this is an ultimatum.

Peter uses an imperative here – you might want to write into your text an exclamation point at the end of this phrase – **Casting all your anxiety on Him! (exclamation point)**

The verb for **casting** here has the idea of throwing them on another. It was used for that event where the disciples threw their cloaks on the back of the donkey upon which Jesus would ride into Jerusalem (**Luke 19:35**)

Bible scholars believe that Peter is more than likely quoting from Psalm 55:22 where David writes, Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you. Psalm 55:22a

David wrote this text when he was struggling with the betrayal and attacks of those who should have defended and supported him.^v

In other words, David's personal struggle with concerns and sorrows and anxieties related to feeling entirely alone and attacked drove him to write under inspiration – I'm going to take all of it and throw it on the shoulders of my strong, living Lord.

Here's the point: You don't surrender to your circumstances, you surrender your circumstances to the Savior. And that happens to be an ultimatum for the Christian to live by.

Secondly, notice, here comes the affirmation – *verse 7*;

The Affirmation

. . . Because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7b

Just as casting all your care on Him is not a suggestion, but an ultimatum, so this phrase is not a question, it is an affirmation.

There's no question mark at the end of this verse. Peter doesn't write, "Casting all your care on Him because I think He cares for you? Because I'm hopeful that He knows what's going on in your life . . . I don't know . . . we can't be sure, can we?"

No, Peter in fact uses the word for *care* here, which involves the nuance of someone having an interest in someone else as a result of forethought.^{vi}

In other words, Jesus not only cares about you, but He saw that trouble or sorrow or pain or challenge or difficulty coming in your life ahead of time . . . and He not only saw it ahead of time, but because He cares about you, He knew what you would need ahead of time.

And what do you need? It might be:

- the courage you need to not run away from it;
- the wisdom you need to start over, or take the next step;

- the strength you need to face the dragon and trust the ultimate dragon slayer – your Savior.

So get this nuance from Peter's inspired pen: it's a little mind-bending to think about the omniscient, timeless eternity of the Lord;

- but that trial you're facing *was itself* the result of His forethought;
- and the care you needed in going through that trial was also a part of His forethought – God has already thought of everything you would need beforehand.

That's why when you come out of that challenging chapter, you're able to see how someone showed up at the right time – with just the right word – or the right amount of money – or the right solution . . . and we're always a bit surprised.

And we say things to each other like, "You won't believe it, but:

- at just the right time my phone rang . . .
- or at my darkest hour a friend showed up . . .
- or at the last moment the package arrived . . .
- or when I had to know for sure, the answer came."

And guess what – Peter informs us here that it happened like that because God knew ahead of time . . . and God cared ahead of time . . . and God timed exactly what you needed . . . ahead of time.

Hudson Taylor, the aged missionary statesman was in Great Britain traveling and speaking. He lived with such simple trust and faith in the provision of God. He'd depended on the Lord for nearly 50 years serving in China without any guaranteed financial support.

More than once he received money from George Mueller, the orphanage director, as if George Mueller could afford to give any money away.

Well, Hudson is standing at the train station when a pastor recognized him and introduced himself. They were waiting for the same train and they got on together and sat together.

Eventually the meal cart came down the aisle and the pastor offered to buy Hudson Taylor's lunch, and they enjoyed a meal together.

After a while, the conductor came down the aisle to sell and/or punch the tickets for that leg of the journey and Hudson hesitated; the pastor offered to purchase Taylor's ticket. After the conductor had moved on, he asked Hudson if he actually had any money. Taylor smiled and said, "No money at all." The man said, "But you were waiting for this train – and you needed to eat – how did you know I would come along and be able to provide this for you." Hudson Taylor looked at him and gave that famous reply he'd lived by for many years, "Oh, I didn't know – but my Father did."

My father knew. I love to read stories like that . . . just don't ask me to live them. I'd rather read about them.

Slaying those dragons of anxieties involves obeying an ultimatum . . . followed by trusting in this affirmation.

Casting all your anxiety on Him . . . because He cares about you.

By the way, this word for anxiety is comprehensive. It stands for everything that you might brood over; anything you might lose sleep over; big things and little things; important things and trivial things. If you're anxious about it – He cares about it.

You could translate this phrase rather woodenly to read, "to Him it is a care concerning you."^{vii}

You can paraphrase it to read: whatever is on your mind, was on His mind first – He knows the color and size and shape of every dragon you face.

So what do we do about this ultimatum and this affirmation? Let me give you **Four Action Points**:

First,

1. This is something you've got to do!

Place your worries on Him like the disciples placed their cloaks on the back of that colt. You've got to do that – regularly. The truth is, we often have trouble giving our worries to Jesus because we're not sure He's going to do with them what we want.

Which is another way of not ***humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God*** – which comes first. Humbling ourselves under God's sovereign control precedes casting on Him our concerns.

And that's because you're not just throwing your worries on Him – you're throwing yourself on Him – you're casting your loved ones on Him – you're throwing your future – you're throwing your expectations and hopes and plans on Him! You are no longer in control . . . He is.

Casting yourself into His care – one author vividly illustrated this text by writing – feels like you are bungee jumping off a high bridge; no longer in control . . . you are totally helpless and dependent on the strength of that giant rubber-band.^{viii}

Not very reassuring is it? The good news is, Jesus isn't a rubber-band – He doesn't break – He is the sovereign, faithful, timely Lord of the universe.

Secondly,

2. This is something you've got to believe!

Because He cares for you

Every other religion on the planet has adherents attempting to make their god care; Christianity delivers the promise that our God already does.

Still, this might be nothing less, for you right now, than an amazing declaration of faith and trust. Right now, you're in the process of trusting God in the dark . . . right now you are walking with Him through the valley.

You could write in the margins of the map of your life right now – Here be dragons! And yes, there are dragons to be slayed . . . especially the dragon of anxiety.

Continually remind yourself of this affirmation – He cares for you.

One evangelical author wrote about one of the early experiences of an African American pastor by the name of Gardner Taylor, who faithfully pastored for years in New York City. One of our summer series guests in the past, Richard Allen Farmer, would visit Dr. Taylor in Durham, where he'd retired, before he passed away at the age of 97. This author records Dr. Taylor's retelling of an experience – he writes, "Gardner Taylor told me on one occasion that he was preaching in Louisiana during the Depression. Electricity was just coming into that part of the country, and he was out in a rural, black church that had just one little light bulb hanging down from the ceiling to light up the whole sanctuary. He was young and inexperienced, but he was preaching away when in the middle of his sermon, all of a sudden, the electricity went out. The building went completely dark; Dr. Taylor didn't know what to say, being a young preacher. He stumbled around for words until one of the elderly deacons sitting in the back of the sanctuary raised his voice and cried out, "Preach on, preacher! We can still see Jesus in the dark!"

Wow . . . that statement alone is quite a sermon! Sometimes that's the only time we *can* see Him—in the dark. And Peter is informing us with this affirmation – whether we can see him in the dark or not, he can see *us*.^{ix}

We can lose track of Him . . . He never loses track of us. This is an affirmation you can obey . . . and believe.

Thirdly,

3. This is something you've got to practice!

This is something you've got to practice – every time an anxious thought comes along breathing fire your back.

You see an anxious thought coming . . . a worry beginning to enter your mind – practice as early as possible in the process the discipline of refusal . . . you're not going to handle this

one – you're tossing it on Jesus. It occurred to me that this is one of the few times in life when it's okay to throw things.

I've never thrown a net as a fisherman; I've never thrown blankets over the back of a colt either . . . but this imagery is fascinating.

It made me think back to all those baseballs I threw as a pitcher in little league . . . many, many, years ago – in fact, it was literally in the last century – that's not a fun thought.

All the teams were sponsored by local businesses – and I remember being embarrassed because our sponsor was a dry cleaner in town called People's Cleaners. Not exactly the coolest name for a team . . . and we were so little and that company name was so long, by the time they embroidered People's Cleaners on our jersey's it wrapped around our bodies. Why couldn't it have been something short and cool like Nike?

Well, Nike hadn't even been invented yet. That's how long ago this was.

I'd love to tell you that I was a really good pitcher. I wasn't. In fact, after a season, I asked the coach if he'd keep me at first base and never let me pitch again and he readily agreed.

I can still remember though how important it was to warm up . . . to stay limber . . . to ice the elbow after a game.

For the believer, there's this sense that you need to develop a good throwing arm . . . keep your spirit limber . . . keep your faith stretched out in prayer . . . ice your thoughts regularly with the truth of scripture . . . because at any moment, you're going to need to be able to throw worry as far away from you as you can – and not just throw it, but hit the target – you are throwing it on the Lord.

You're casting, and Jesus is caring.

- How do you know He'll handle it? He said He would;
- How do you know He cares about it? He said He did;
- How do you know He's even interested in it? He said He was!

Listen, if you don't believe it, it's your word against His! Who are you going to believe? You . . . or Him.

- This is something you've got to do;
- This is something you've got to believe;
- This is something you've got to practice.

Finally,

4. This is Someone you've got to trust.

When Peter writes here *Because He cares for you* he uses the present tense to inform us that Jesus never stops caring. This is ongoing, never-ending, never ceasing, never slowing down, never letting up – caring.

The problem is that we stop casting . . . not that Jesus stops caring. Send the dragons to Him.

If I can dip back into my favorite biography on Hudson Taylor – there was a time when the demands of the China Inland Mission were

mounting. More than a 1,000 missionaries . . . several schools and mission outposts . . . demands for funds and pressures financially that would have buried others with worry.

And on one those occasions he totaled up their funds and found they had only 25 cents in the Mission Bank account. He wrote a note to his wife and also to his bookkeeper, "We have this – 25 cents, plus all the promises of God."^x We have 25 cents, plus all the promises of God.

Peter invites us out into the deep end of faith where we throw – like he used to throw his fishing nets . . . we throw our burdens on the One who has promised us His unending, undistracted, unrelenting care.

So . . . cast all your anxiety on Him . . . because He never will stop caring for you.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 05/13/2018 by Stephen Davey.

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i Benoit Denizet-Lewis, *Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Anxiety?* New York Times Magazine (10-11-2017)

ii Alex Williams, *Prozac Nation Is Now the United States of Xanax*, New York Times (6-10-2017)

iii Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Hopeful* (David C Cook, 1982), p. 155

iv Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume IV* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), p. 589

v Adapted from John MacArthur, *1 Peter* (Moody Publishers), p. 2004, p. 279

vi John Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter* (Kregel, 2005), p. 197

vii D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (BMH Books, 1984), p. 313

viii Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Living Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter* (Zondervan, 2010), p. 244

ix Adapted from Timothy George's sermon "Unseen Footprints," *PreachingToday Audio* (Issue 290)

x Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor: Volume II* (OMF International, 1918), p. 256