

## LET GO AND LET GOD 1 PETER 5:7

Last Sunday we were reunited with some dear friends that we had not seen for many, many years. Dennis is more than ten years older than me, but ever since I was four years old I admired him so much that I wanted to be just like him. He was cool, handsome, winsome, and the kindest person I'd ever met. He was a star athlete and the valedictorian of his High School. He played the guitar and had a fabulous voice. And he had great hair. Whenever my dad would cut my hair I would ask him if he could make me look like Dennis.

I was in eighth grade when Dennis got married to a lovely, fun, feisty little red-head named Debbie from the Pacific Northwest. At first I was fearful that she might take Dennis away from our church, and that they would settle in some remote place like Oregon where we would never see them again. But I was thrilled when they decided to stay in our California community and lead the youth group in our church.

Because of their leadership, that youth group was extraordinary. Not only did we have a lot of fun together, but we grew a lot spiritually. Dennis and Debbie taught me how to worship; they taught me how to pray, and they taught me how to love the Lord. They were instrumental in my own spiritual awakening at the age of sixteen, due, in part, to them showing me what Jesus looks like by loving me with His love.

And so, even after I got married and became an adult (which occurred in that order), it was still my ambition to be like Dennis and Debbie. Mindy felt the same. They had a sort of idyllic existence, or so it seemed to us. They had a beautiful marriage and three beautiful children. They lived in a beautiful home on a beautiful piece of property nestled among towering Ponderosa Pines in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada's. Their lives were like a contemporary *Little House on the Prairie*.

Fast forward forty years to today. After they moved to Washington in the mid-eighties, and then to Palm Springs after that, we virtually lost contact with them. So when they came to our home for supper last Sunday after church we had a lot of catching up to do. After reminiscing for a while, we began to ask them about their family.

I'm not sure what I was expecting to hear, but what I heard was certainly not what I expected. In the last twenty years they have experienced and endured more heartache than just about anybody I have ever known. Within this lovely family there has been infidelity, divorce, debilitating depression, suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction, interventions, arrests, incarcerations, homelessness, and multiple stints in rehab facilities. There have been near fatal accidents, medivac life flights, prolonged comas, and traumatic brain injuries.

For four and a half hours we listened and cried and prayed and cried again as Dennis and Debbie told us their story. And ever since that day I cannot stop thinking about them. I cannot stop picturing their pain-blanching, tear-streaked faces in my mind, wondering how in the world they have been able to handle all this heartache, wondering what has kept them from becoming disillusioned with God, wondering how they have been able to rebound from all these horrific experiences and still be able to laugh and sing and hope and worship.

I think one of the reasons I cannot stop thinking about Dennis and Debbie is because, subconsciously, I had an expectation, based on my experiences with them, based on my observations of them, that they were somehow immune to such devastating heartache. When someone follows after Christ so passionately, serves God so faithfully, lives the Christian life so consistently, and loves so deeply, it stands to reason that God will shelter

them from the raging storms of life. And so somehow it comes as a surprise when we hear that not only have these people been pounded by numerous storms, but they've been seriously injured in those storms.

I suspect that some of you are in a raging storm right now, and you feel battered and bruised. Some of you feel like you are floundering, and the waves keep crashing over you, leaving you to wonder how much longer you can keep your head above water. You're dealing with heartache, or crises, or pressures that are making you feel anxious and overwhelmed.

What do you do?

Peter was writing to some followers of Jesus who were suffering intensely through no fault of their own. They were being harassed and persecuted because of their allegiance to Jesus Christ, and, as a result, were kicked out of their families, fired from their jobs, forced from their homes, and ostracized by their communities. Some were imprisoned, and some were even killed.

Such circumstances naturally produce grief. But sometimes they produce fear and anxiety, not so much for what *has* happened, but for what *might* happen. We call this worry. Worry is the result of feeling vulnerable. It's a sense of dread that something bad might happen. And the tendency for those who worry is to go into a mode of self-protection—to be hyper vigilant about how to *keep* those bad things from happening. Those thoughts consume them and overwhelm them and perhaps even suffocate them.

And so in his concluding remarks to people who had experienced enormous pain and loss, and some who were dreading even more pain and loss, Peter says, **verse 7**. “*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*”

This is a short and simple verse, and no doubt most of us are familiar with it. We've sung it in songs, and several of us have memorized it. But what does it mean, and how do we do it?

The word “anxiety” in verse 7 refers to a “feeling of apprehension or distress in view of possible danger or misfortune” (Louw-Nida, Greek Lexicon). It is a dreadful sense of vulnerability that something bad might happen and if it does it will be terribly painful and traumatic. In other words, it is a reference to worry, and it could be translated “worries” or “cares.”

You should know that there are two kinds of *cares* in the Bible. There are legitimate cares that are profitable and constructive. Paul, for example, used this word when describing his care for the church, or his care about the second coming of Christ. These are good things that consumed his thoughts and towards which he devoted his time and energy in a productive way.

But the Bible also talks about frivolous cares that waste our time and have no eternal value. These are cares that have reference to our physical health, our financial well-being, our reputation or status, our personal comfort, our job security, etc. Jesus talked about some of these things in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, “Don't take *care* about food, or clothing, or money” (Matthew 6).

He also used this word in the parable of the soils when he described the seed that fell among thorns. Those thorns represented “*the cares*” of this world, which choked the plants until they died.

It is interesting to note that the root of the English word “worry” is “to strangle” or “to choke.” Isn't that exactly what worry does? It strangles our sense of well-being and chokes our peace.

These are the kinds of *cares* that Peter is referring to in verse 7. Not the productive, constructive kind, but the wasteful, destructive kind.

I don't want you to raise your hand, but I would like you to honestly answer the question, are you a *worrier*? When dealing with difficult or problematic circumstances, are you obsessed with thoughts like, "what's going to happen to me or my loved ones? How can I protect myself and them? How can I manage the situation that will ensure a good outcome? What if circumstances take a turn for the worse? What if things *never* get better?" Do you go over and over these things in your mind, trying to come up with solutions, trying to figure out how you can make things turn out the way you want?

In this description of worry, are you able to make the connection between being a worrier and trying to be in control? Worry is a control issue. We most often worry about things we cannot control...but that we would *like* to control. That's why worry, at its root, is a manifestation of pride—the belief that "if *I* could control the circumstances and people that are troubling me, things would turn out well and the problem would be solved and I would be okay."

I'd like you to look at the context of verse 7 by reading the previous verse. **Verses 6-7.** *"Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."*

When I first read this passage I wondered how casting our cares on God is related to humbling ourselves under His mighty hand. It seems like two independent thoughts or two separate commands. In fact it's written that way in my translation, which is unfortunate because it makes it more confusing.

But in the Greek language the word translated "cast" (or, better yet, "casting") is a participle—a verbal adjective, which means that it actually modifies the main verb of the sentence. And that main verb is "Humble yourselves".

The point is, casting our cares upon God, instead of carrying them and being weighed down by them ourselves, is a means by which we obey Peter's command to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. It is one of the ways in which we acknowledge that we are not in charge of our own lives and circumstances, nor are we trying to manipulate those circumstances in order to ensure our own safety and security and comfort and well-being.

We learned last week about pride, and how God feels about pride. A proud person is someone with an over-inflated ego—a person who has a distorted view of him/herself.

One manifestation of pride is self-reliance and self-sufficiency. It is saying, "I'm in control of my life, and I can do things myself. I can take matters into my own hands and things will be just fine."

Do you see the connection to pride?

Now, I have little doubt that every one of us would agree that worry is *not* a good thing. We know, at least in our minds, how destructive it is. Research reveals that it does a number on our emotions *and* our bodies. But there's something more significant about worry than just our mental and emotional and physical health. It is a spiritual issue—a theological issue. It's a test of what you really think about God.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said *"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"*<sup>32</sup> *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them" (Matt. 6:31-32).*

Gentiles were called pagans because they believed in lesser gods or no gods at all (Robinson). It was natural for them to worry because their gods were temperamental and

impersonal and unreliable. They could not count on them in times of trouble because they could not be sure they were capable or even interested.

And so pagans, quite naturally, are anxious. Jesus says, “They frantically chase things like food and clothing and money.”

But that kind of attitude is inappropriate for children of God. We have a Father who loves us, who knows what we need, who wants to provide and who *will* provide. So Christians who worry are either closet pagans wearing Christian costumes, or are poor theologians. Christians who worry are revealing that they haven’t really grasped who God is and how they are related to Him. They are admitting that they don’t really believe God is in control, or that He loves them, or that He will do what’s in their best interests. And so they’re compelled to take matters into their own hands.

Do you know God well enough to trust Him? To relinquish control of your own life and security and destiny and let Him take care of you?

Here’s how you can tell: Are you willing to “cast” your anxiety on Him?

What’s the antidote for worry?

There is a manuscript which still exists written by a first century Greek philosopher. He wrote, “When I drink wine my worries go to sleep.” Lots of people could have written that. Many try to escape their worries by medicating their anxiety through alcohol or drugs or some activity that calms them down or helps them forget. But that only intensifies and aggravates the problem.

A professor from Harvard, a psychiatrist who published a book called, *Worry: Hope and Help for a Common Condition*, was interviewed by *The Oregonian*. He was asked the question, “If I worry too much, how do I solve it?” His answer? “Cognitive behavioral psychotherapy.”

Peter has a better solution—and it doesn’t cost \$150 a session. **Verse 7.** “*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*”

Peter, a former fisherman, was very familiar with the concept of casting. The word means to throw something upon someone or something, like when a fisherman cast his net into the sea, or when a person threw a blanket on a horse. It’s an action word. It describes a deliberate act of letting go of something that you are carrying and letting someone else carry it for you.

Peter is telling us to let go of our *cares* and to throw them upon our heavenly Father. He’s saying, “Let go and let God.” Release that situation or circumstance or person that you’ve been fretting over, and give it to God.

Let me say it again: When you realize that you are worrying about something, you simply say, “Okay, I’m worrying—I’m trying to take matters into my own hands. That’s not only a waste of time and energy, it’s a manifestation of pride. I confess it to you, Lord, and ask for your forgiveness. And right now I choose to accept your invitation to give you this concern. Here it is. Please take it from me. You work in this situation or this person in your time, in your way. I entrust the outcome to you. Now, release me from my consuming thoughts and let me rest in you.”

There is something else of significance about this word, *casting*. The tense of the participle indicates that this is to be a single, decisive act. It’s not like fly fishing where you cast repeatedly. It’s a one-time cast. You entrust it to God, period. You say, “Father, I’m giving this to you and I will not take it back, even if I don’t see you work, even if you don’t handle it the way I think you should. It’s now yours.”



How can you be sure that giving it to God is the best thing to do? It's found in the end of **verse 7**. "...because **he** cares for you." Let me say it again. "...because **he** **cares** for you." One more time: "...because **he** cares for **you**."

Do you realize how privileged we are to have a relationship with a God who cares? This is unique to Christianity. In Greek religion it was unthinkable that a god would be personally concerned for a human being. And in other religions one doesn't approach a god with the assumption that he cares. In most religions one approaches him with the assumption that he's disinterested, detached, and that somehow one has to do something that will get his attention and make him care.

I've been to a number of Hindu temples. Do you know what the first thing the priest or the worshiper does when he/she walks in to that temple? Ring a bell. Do you know why? Because one must either wake up the god or get his attention. And then one must offer some sacrifice and perform some rituals in order to try to make him care about you.

But not so with our God. He loves us more than we can ever know. He is interested in every single detail of our lives, and, not only that, He wants to be involved in those details. And so important are we to God that He is going to personally see to it that we are taken care of. There's nothing He wouldn't do for us.

But there's something else that is just as marvelous. He not only loves us, He is sovereign and all powerful. We belong to a God who is in charge of everything, and is capable of doing anything. If He created the world out of nothing by the power of a spoken word, if He raised his Son Jesus from the dead, He is more than capable of handling our problems.

Give them to Him. He can be trusted. He can make something good come out of it.

Let go, and let God.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I've got friends in high places?" What's behind those words? A great sense of security. Because that person knows, and is relying on the fact, that if he ever gets in a bind, he's got a friend with enough power and resources to help him out. So he doesn't have to worry.

God possess all power and all authority. He sees all our needs before we even see them. And He is always with us—providing, protecting, ensuring that all things work out for the good.

When we were talking with Dennis and Debbie last Sunday we asked them how they have been able to handle all their heartache, how their faith has remained intact, and how they have been able to rebound from all these horrific experiences and still be able to laugh and sing and hope and worship.

I will never forget what Debbie said. "When you are in a raging storm sometimes God takes you out of the storm, but more often He takes your hand or carries you *in* the storm." In other words, He doesn't remove you from the traumatic circumstances or even diminish the pain, but he lets you experience his presence and his grace, which is sufficient to sustain you in it.

Not all the painful issues in their family have been resolved. But I saw a peace in Dennis and Debbie that passes all understanding, a peace that was guarding their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:7).

What's on your heart this morning? Is there something that you need to let go of and give to God?

Don't worry. Worry is inappropriate for a child of God. It is a waste of time and energy.

Let go and let God. Throw your cares on the One who cares so much for you, and the One who will gladly take your cares, and replace them with His peace.

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1 PETER 5:7

**MAIN IDEA:** CAST ALL YOUR CARES UPON THE LORD, FOR HE CARES FOR YOU.

**THE ASSUMPTION:** WE ALL HAVE “CARES”

THE MEANING OF “CARE”

TWO KINDS OF “CARES”

**THE ROOT:** “CARES” ARE THE RESULT OF PRIDE

THE CONTEXT OF VERSE 7

SELF-RELIANCE/SELF-SUFFICIENCY

**THE SOLUTION:** CAST YOUR “CARES” ON GOD

RELINQUISHING PERSONAL CONTROL

ENTRUSTING IT TO ONE WHO HAS CONTROL

**THE REASON:** HE CARES

OUR GOD IS DIFFERENT!

OUR GOD IS INTERESTED AND LOVES US IMMENSELY!

# Family Life Groups

## Sermon Discussion Questions

### 1 Peter 5:7

**Main Idea:** Cast all your cares on the Lord, for he cares for you.

**Do you have a tendency to worry? If so, what do you worry about? Why do you worry? Can you discern how your worry might be related to pride (5:6)?**

**The word “cast” means to throw. How do you “throw” your worries on the Lord? Describe the process using a specific worry in your life.**

**Sometimes we “throw” a worry on the Lord, but then take it back a little later and hold on to it again. Why? What can you do to release it once and for all?**