

## INTRODUCTION

In 1924, Jack Sundine was a young boy who had the opportunity to meet the President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, in the White House. Jack recalls as he waited in the long line with his father, he noticed the President was saying something to every person as he shook their hands. Jack was excited about thought of having the President of the United States speak some profound words of wisdom to him. Finally, the thrilling moment arrived, and as young Jack shook hands with Calvin Coolidge, Coolidge bent over and said three words Jack never forgot. He said, "Move along quickly."

What a disappointment! He got the impression the President didn't even care he was there. It's true sometimes people don't care about us. When you share your problems with someone they may say, "Excuse me, you must have mistaken me for someone who cares." That's harsh! But today, I want to assure you God cares for you, and He has some profound words to say to you. They are found in I Peter 5:6-7. Are you paying attention? "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him for he cares for you." It's rare for me to teach on a single verse, but verse 7 is such a powerful statement it cannot be ignored. It has only eleven words, and ten of them are one-syllable words—only the word "anxiety" has more than a single syllable. It's a simple verse, but carries a profound message.

It's a message this stressed-out generation needs to hear. Billy Graham has written that we live in the age of anxiety. In terms of technology and creature comforts, we have it easier than our forefathers, yet there is more uneasiness. The badge of earlier generations was calloused hands, but the badge of our generation is the furrowed brow. They could be called the work glove generation—ours is the Botox generation. (Comments from *Decision Magazine*, online, August 2004).

Most Americans are suffering from emotional overload. Have you ever felt the same way David did when he wrote these words? "My pain has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear." (Psalm 38:4) You may be thinking, "I'm having to carry more than I can bear." I want to share with you *how* to unload your burdens. Notice three important truths in this verse:

### 1. MY PROBLEM: ANXIETY!

The Bible word for anxiety is *merimna*. It means "to divide" or "to distract." It comes from the verb *meridzo*, the source of our English words "meridian" and "merit." Anxiety is having a disturbed and distracted mind. It's a fear or dread about some real or perceived threat.

This definition of anxiety isn't from a medical journal, but it describes anxiety in a way most can understand: Anxiety is a gnawing dread in your gut that something bad may happen. Some of the visible symptoms of anxiety are restlessness, irritability, fatigue, difficulty in concentrating, and difficulty sleeping.

In the Bible, Job was a man who suffered severe anxiety. In a single day he lost his fortune, family, and his health. This is how he described his feeling of anxiety: "The churning inside me

never stops; days of suffering confront me.” (Job 30:27)

Now, if Job had known in the end God was going to reward his faithfulness with twice as much wealth, and another houseful of children, that inner churning wouldn’t have been as difficult to handle.

Our culture is experiencing an infectious anxiety epidemic. But medical studies have shown much of what we worry about constitutes needless anxiety. Studies reveal 40 percent of what we worry about will never happen. 30 percent of what we worry about is from the past and can’t be changed. 12 percent is worry about criticism from others, much of it untrue. 10 percent of the things we worry about are health issues, which actually are worse when we worry. And only 8 percent of what we worry about constitutes real problems we have to face. So, 92 percent of your anxiety is needless. And the Bible says we are to cast 100 percent of our anxiety on God!

People were anxious in the time of Jesus, too. Even people who knew Him personally suffered from worry. Jesus once visited the home of Mary and Martha for a meal. The Polish artist, Henryk Siemiradzki, painted this scene in 1886. Because of the heat, many meals were eaten outdoors in a shaded atrium. In his painting, Jesus is seen talking to Mary, sitting at his feet, just enjoying their conversation. We often assume Jesus was doing all the talking—like giving a sermon on the porch or something. But having been a husband for over 30 years, I suspect Mary was talking at least as much to Jesus—probably more. She was sharing her thoughts, her feelings, and her pain.

Realistic olive trees frame the beautiful Judean hills in the background. At first you don’t even notice Martha. Upon closer inspection, you’ll find Martha almost hidden in the shadows in the upper left corner. She is wringing her hands and her face is clouded with anger. The Bible says her bitterness finally exploded. She said to Jesus: “Lord DON’T YOU CARE that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” (Luke 10:40) Hang on to those four words for a minute: Lord, don’t you care? Have you ever said or thought those exact words? I know I have. “Lord, I’m hurting here. Things are tough. It’s as if you have your back turned to me. Lord, don’t you even care?” But Jesus *does* care. He replied to Mary in words that contained both the diagnosis and the prescription for anxiety: “Martha, Martha, (repeating someone’s name was a sign of affection) you are worried (the same word in I Peter 5:7—*merimna*—a distracted, dreading, attitude) Jesus continued, “You are upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her.” (Luke 10:41) The one thing I need when I’m full of anxiety and upset about many things is to fall at the feet of Jesus and cast my cares and anxiety on Him. Would you repeat this after me? “When I’m full of worry and upset about many things I need to get on my knees and give my anxiety to Jesus, because He cares for me!” That’s what He invites us to do. As we continue, consider

## **2. GOD’S PROPOSAL: CAST ALL YOUR WORRIES ON HIM!**

We try to carry our own burdens, but God invites us to cast them on Him. It’s easier said than done. I can personally relate to the little poem that says: It is His will that I should cast / My care on Him each day. / He also bids me not to cast / My confidence away. But oh, how foolishly I act / When taken unaware; / I cast away my confidence / And carry all my care! (Author

Unknown)

Pay attention to the first word in I Peter 5:17: Cast. The Greek word for cast is *ballo*, which means "to toss or to throw." In Luke 19, we read the disciples of Jesus threw their cloaks onto the back of a borrowed colt for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem. It's the same word—*ballo*—that's used here. Casting your anxiety on the Lord is like putting a saddle on a horse before you ride it. It would be preposterous for you to ride a horse while carrying the saddle on your shoulders. But that's what many of you are doing today with your problems—you're trying to carry them yourself instead of tossing them on the Lord.

So *how* do you do that? If you want to learn how to do something well, you should seek out someone who is already doing it well and let them teach you. When I first learned to fly, I didn't want someone teaching me who had never landed an airplane! The Apostle Paul was an expert at casting his anxiety on the Lord. He had been stoned, shipwrecked, and beaten with sticks. He had plenty to worry about but he refused to be anxious. When he was in prison he wrote to teach us how to cast our anxiety on the Lord: "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life." (Philippians 4:6-7 *The Message*)

When you are worrying about something, you can't be praying about it. But when you are praying about something you can't be worrying about it. Too many Christians make the mistake of getting on their knees and telling God about their problems; then they get up and keep on carrying the burden themselves. Like the old song says, "Take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there."

I recently read a short story called "The Trouble Tree." (Author unknown) I'll tell it in the first person voice of the man who wrote about it.

Some years ago I hired a local carpenter to restore this old cabin. When he arrived he was frustrated because a traffic jam had made him late. The day only got worse. Some of the building material I had ordered never arrived, and then the motor in his electric saw burned out. Then, when he got ready to go home, his truck wouldn't start. So, he was pretty upset when I offered to drive him home, but he accepted my offer.

I could still hear the traces of anger in his voice as he talked about the job. When we arrived he thanked me for the ride and invited me to meet his family. Just before he walked into his little house, he stepped over to a small tree and paused for a minute. He took his strong hands and touched the tips of several of the branches. As he opened the back door an amazing transformation occurred. A smile split his tanned face as he hugged his two daughters and wife, then as if he didn't have a care in the world he introduced me to his family.

As he walked me back to my car I pointed to the tree and asked him about it. He said, "Oh, that's my trouble tree. It's not usual for me to have the kind of frustrating trouble I experienced today, but one thing's for sure, those troubles from the job don't belong in

the house with my wife and girls. So every afternoon I just hang my troubles on this tree and then I pick 'em back up the next morning when I leave for work."

He smiled and said, "It's a funny thing, though. When I come out in the morning to pick 'em up, there ain't nearly as many as I remember hanging there the night before—and they ain't nearly as heavy as they was yesterday."

Wouldn't it be great if you had a trouble tree? We've got something, or actually, Someone much better than a trouble tree. Jesus Christ hung on His very own trouble tree at Calvary. He did that because He cares for you. He cares for you so much He invites you to cast all your anxiety on Him.

In her book, *You Can Too*, Christian businesswoman Mary Crowley writes about how she learned to cast her anxiety on the Lord. She wrote: "When things go wrong, I just don't go with them. Every evening I turn my worries over to God. He's going to be up all night anyway." Our problem is anxiety. God's proposal is to cast all our anxiety on Him, now consider:

### **3. GOD'S PROMISE: HE CARES FOR YOU!**

There are hundreds of promises in the Bible that assure us God really does care for you and for me. I want to share just four statements about God's character to prove just how much He cares for you. For those of you who like English grammar, these four statements are similes. A simile is a figure of speech in which two essentially different things are compared—often using the words "as" or "like." If you remove the first "I" in the word simile, you're left with the word smile. It's true in the Christian life also that whenever you remove your ego, (the big "I" who tries to be first) you'll smile at the result. Each one of these similes about God should make you smile:

#### **(1) God cares for you like a daddy counting his child's first steps**

Like all you dads, I remember how exciting it was when my baby girls took their first steps. We brought Jenni home from the hospital and I watched her in the crib wondering if she would ever have the strength to even roll over. But soon she started sitting up, and then she started crawling. I wondered if she would ever walk. But finally the day arrived when I pointed her at Cindy and she took one, two, three steps on her own. We were so excited! And then in a flash it seemed as if she had her driver's license and she was gone!

Parents, do you remember how excited you were when your baby took those first steps? You probably called the grandparents and said, "Johnny took four steps today." But you probably stopped counting the steps and started trying to chase them down! God is like that. He counts your steps, and He never stops counting. The Bible says: "For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? Does he not see my ways and count my every step?"... "Surely then, you count my steps but do not keep track of my sin." (Job 31:2-4; 14:16)

Isn't that wonderful? God counts our steps, but He doesn't keep track of the times we fall. You've already taken many steps, and perhaps you have many more steps to take—rest assured that God is watching and counting your every step. Your steps may lead you into a hospital room

where you sit by the side of a suffering loved one—God counts those steps. Your steps may take you into a funeral home to look at the human remains of someone you loved—He counts those steps. Your steps may take you through divorce, disaster, and despair—God's counting them. Who cares? God cares for you, like a father counting his child's first steps!

## **(2) God cares for you like a mother calming her hurting child**

Every mother has an instinctive desire to protect her children from danger and to comfort them when they're hurting. A mother's touch and voice can soothe a troubled child like nothing else. Mothers also want their children to be happy. You might not remember it, but there was probably a time when your mother bounced you on her knee and chanted, "Ride a little horsy, down to town; Watch out baby, or you'll fall down!" Did you know the Bible says God cares for you like a mother bouncing her child on her knee? In Isaiah 66 God says, "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you." (Isaiah 66:12-13)

We all know the Bible teaches God is our Heavenly Father, but did you know God reveals He relates to us as a mother as well? If you're a mom, I think you'll agree that there is an amazing connection between a mother and a baby. It goes deeper than just a physical relationship. Marsha Kaitz, a psychology professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem conducted a test to determine this mother/child connection. Forty six mothers who gave birth in the previous five to seventy hours participated. Each mother was blindfolded and asked to identify which of three sleeping babies was hers. They were not told in advance, so they couldn't prepare by studying their child. In this test nearly 70 percent of the mothers correctly identified their babies.

This mysterious connection between a mother and her baby is profound. Now multiply that connection a trillion times and you will begin to grasp how much God cares for you. He created you in love so you could be His child. Who cares? God cares for you like a mother comforting her hurting child!

## **(3) God cares for you like a hen covering her frightened chicks**

Of all of God's creatures, the hen is one of the most protective of her young. Whenever a hawk flies over the farmyard, a hen clucks to call her chicks and shelters them under her wing. The Bible affirms that God will "cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge." (Psalm 91:4)

Before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus walked down the Mount of Olives and as He surveyed the panorama of the city of Jerusalem, He wept because the people rejected His offer of love and forgiveness. Today there is a chapel in that very spot on the Mount of Olives called the Chapel of Tears (Dominos Flavet). Inside you can find a mosaic of a hen protecting her chicks. Jesus said, "How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34)

A forest fire burnt down a farmhouse in western Canada. As the embers cooled, the devastated

farmer was walking over the ruins and noticed a burned lump on the ground. He prodded it with his stick and saw it was a hen, burned to death. The farmer turned the hen over and, to his surprise out ran three chirping baby chicks. The hen died in the flames even as it saved the lives of her helpless chicks. Jesus loves you so much He was willing to cover our sinfulness and to die so we can live. Who cares? God cares for you...like a hen covering her frightened chicks.

#### **(4) God cares for you like an eagle coaxing its young to fly**

While you may not think a little hen is a noble analogy for God, you must admit that a soaring eagle is the most majestic of all the birds in God's creation. The Bible says, "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The Lord alone led him (Jacob)." (Deuteronomy 32:11)

The school of Veterinary Medicine at Auburn University has done extensive research into the parental behavior of Golden Eagles. Parent eagles teach their young to fly in a very unusual way. For the first ten weeks of their lives, an eaglet is safe and secure in its nest. The parent eagles protect and feed their young. A baby eagle doesn't fly instinctively, they have to be taught. At first they resist flying—who could blame them? They have a comfort zone in the nest! So the parents have to force their newborn eaglets to fly. They literally kick them out of the nest.

First, they use their talons to stir up the nest. They expose the sharp ends of the sticks so that the eaglets are no longer in a comfort zone. Then the parent eagle flaps its wings furiously until the eaglets jump to the edge of the nest. Then the parent eagle pushes a single eaglet out and it falls—screaming as it plummets down. If the eaglet spreads its wings and catches the airflow, he may fly on the first try, but that seldom happens. If the eaglet doesn't fly, the parent eagle that has been falling with its young spreads its wings and flies under the eaglet. The eagle catches the eaglet and carries it on its pinions back to the nest. Then the process is repeated until each eaglet learns to fly. The behavior of the parents may seem harsh, because Auburn's study discovered that some eaglets die learning to fly. But it is the desire of the parent eagles that their young spread their wings and soar into the sky.

What a great lesson for us! Some of you may think God is harsh toward you right now because He's stirred up your nest. Maybe God knows you've been stuck in your comfort zone too long. God loves you so much He is stirring up your life and He may be getting ready to push you out of your nest of complacency. Or you may have already been pushed out and it seems as if you're plummeting toward a hard landing. Don't worry God will be there to catch you. It may be terrifying at first, but God knows what He's doing. Who cares? God cares—like an eagle coaxing its young to fly.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Anxiety over your problems can be like bricks weighing you down. Life is full of these heavy bricks of adversity. Your bricks may be money, or health, or career, or school, or terrorism, or marriage, or children, or parents, or retirement, or even death—the ultimate anxiety.

Imagine you are carrying these bricks of anxiety around in a backpack. It's going to make you

miserable. And the whole time, Jesus is there, holding out His strong arms inviting you to cast all those anxieties on Him. While you're walking around bent over with the cares of the world, you need to hear the encouraging words of that great old hymn by Joseph Scriven: What a friend we have in Jesus! All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry—everything go God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer...Are we weak and heavy laden? Cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior still our refuge. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness. Take it to the Lord in prayer."

When you stop trying to carry the weight of your problems and cast them into His arms, then you can experience the freedom and lightness of having a tremendous burden lifted off your shoulders. When you do that, you'll be able to sing with conviction: I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus. How I found in Him a friend so strong and true! I would tell you how He changed my life completely. He did something that no other friend could do. No one ever cared for me like Jesus. There's no other friend so kind as He. No one else could take the sin and darkness from me—Oh how much He cares for me!

## OUTLINE

"Cast all your anxiety on Him for He cares for you."

### 1. MY PROBLEM: ANXIETY!

Job said, "The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me." Job 30:27

### 2. GOD'S PROPOSAL: CAST ALL YOUR WORRIES ON HIM!

"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life." Philippians 4:6-7  
*The Message*

### 3. GOD'S PROMISE: HE CARES FOR YOU!

God cares for you like:

- (1) A daddy counting his child's first steps
- (2) A mother calming her hurting child
- (3) A hen covering her frightened chicks
- (4) An eagle coaxing its young to fly



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes