



## **Humble Yourselves: Why & How?**

### **1 Peter 5:6-7**

**David Sunday    August 16, 2020**

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Thank you to all who have worked so hard to make this outdoor service possible, putting the tents up and all the logistics surrounding this. It does my heart good to see so many of you out here this Sunday. It feels like New Covenant Bible Church is back and I rejoice in seeing you all. Praise the Lord!

We are here in the presence of God, all of us on the receiving end of the lavish grace from God. Once we were not a people, but now we are God's people. Once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy. And all of this is so that we may proclaim the praises of Him Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9-10). So let's rejoice in the salvation of God today.

Let's also extend generous expressions of grace and mercy to one another today, because what we've been going through these last six months is uncharted waters. I know many of us are feeling weary and lonely these days. I imagine that each of us have been dealing with rising levels of anxiety, whether it's over politics, the state of our cities, economic anxieties or financial concerns. You may have concerns for your children and all the losses they've had to experience over these last six months. Some of us are wondering when church will feel normal again.

On top of that, add the inadequacies of our own sins, weaknesses and failures we confessed this morning. I read somewhere that anxiety has a way of shrinking our world. It wants us to believe that life is much worse than it really is. Anxiety tries to convince us there are only two options—and both of them are bad. To be human in this fallen world is to experience anxiety. You can't avoid it. You can't deny it. But you can learn how to respond to it.

I was listening to a podcast this past week that described how human beings only have about four or five automatic responses to rising anxiety:

1. We become more conflict prone.
2. We withdraw into isolation.

3. Some of us over-function, becoming overly responsible and taking on other people's duties, thinking for them or telling them what to do.
4. Others of us are happy to let people do that for us, so we become under-functioning and under-responsible.
5. The last way we automatically respond to anxiety is by projection. We tend to gossip or point fingers; we want to find someone to accuse or blame for what's going on.

Left to our natural instincts, we're always going to fall into one of these automatic responses. That's all we know how to do as anxiety rises in our hearts. The greater the anxiety, the more we automatically respond in these ways. As I was listening to this, I could easily identify how I tend to automatically respond to rising anxiety. Can you?

But there is a way to respond to anxiety that is not natural, not automatic, not merely human. To respond to fear and anxiety this way, you have to bring God into the picture. What's the secret to overcoming fear and anxiety according to God? Humble yourself. You heard me correctly. The secret to overcoming fear and anxiety in a way that honors God and blesses people is not blaming them or withdrawing from them or trying to control them. Rather, the way to respond to fear and anxiety is to humble yourself.

Hear God's Word afresh from 1 Peter 5. We're going to focus in today on verses six and seven:

*<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you.*

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, I cast on You the cares of my own heart right now, the desire to share Your Word in a way that strengthens Your people. I cast this care on you, asking You now, Holy Spirit, to empower me, sustain me, taking my words and winging them into each heart. Lord, penetrate each heart precisely at our point of need.

God, please hear our needs today. We know You care for us. We know You're attentive to us. So open our eyes and ears to Your voice and help us, Lord, to be changed, comforted and strengthened by what You speak to us today, so that we may live lives that magnify Your goodness and then demonstrate trust in You, our trustworthy Father. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

The first question on the children's ministry worksheet this morning is, "What attitude does God want us to have?" Do you see the answer there in verse six? God wants us to be

humble. God wants us to have an attitude of humility. Last week we looked at verse five where we are called to clothe ourselves in humility in all our dealings with one another, tying humility around our waist like an apron, following the example of our Master Jesus, when He humbled Himself, became a servant to His disciples and washed their feet.

## **Humility can only thrive when God is in view.**

Today there are two main points I want us to see very clearly. First, we can only clothe ourselves with humility toward one another when we have an awareness of the presence of God. In the words of John Piper, “Humility can only survive in the presence of God. When God goes, humility goes.” In fact, you might say that humility follows God like a shadow. Humility can only thrive when God is in view. You can only have humility when you have an awareness of the presence of God.

We saw last week that God opposes the proud, because pride resists God. Pride diminishes God. Pride belittles God, ignores God and robs God of the glory that belongs to Him alone. Throughout the Bible, we see that God assists the humble, but resists the proud. Oh, the grace God has for those who will humble themselves before Him.

The prophet Isaiah says of God that heaven is His throne and earth is His footstool (Isaiah 66:1). That’s how great and immense God is. But there is one type of person on whom God will rivet His attention like a radar. He always looks on this person with favor. That’s the person who is humble, contrite in heart and who trembles at His Word (Isaiah 66:2).

The opposite is also true. God never responds favorably to pride. That’s not to say God won’t be gracious to proud people. But the way He is gracious to prideful people is that He humbles them. If you want to be filled with God, you first have to be emptied of self. God is able to empty us in order that He might fill us.

Remember King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who one night stood in the courtyard of his castle and looked out on his kingdom. He said, *“Is this not Babylon the Great that I have built to be a royal residence by my vast power and for my majestic glory?”* (Daniel 4:30). He was filled with pride. In no time God humbled him in the dust. He was like a beast, eating grass out in the fields until God restored him. At the end of Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar says, *“Those who walk in pride [God] is able to humble”* (Daniel 4:37).

It is far better to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God than to wait for God to humble you. You don’t want to place yourself in a position of being opposed by an infinitely holy, majestic and almighty God. God’s hand is mighty, subduing all who resist His sovereign

sway. So don't exalt yourself in pride before God; rather, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

When the Bible talks about God's mighty hand, it's talking about God's power to deliver His people. In Deuteronomy 5:15, Moses exhorts Israel, "*Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.*" Peter is saying to us this same power, grace and commitment God showed when He rescued His people from Egypt is active in the heart of God toward His people today, wanting to deliver us from all our foes and fears.

God's hand is mighty to subdue those who resist Him and save those who trust in Him. Will you humble yourself, even now as you're listening to His Word? What does it look like to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God? It looks like saying, "God, I cannot save myself from my sins. I cannot rescue myself from my trials. I cannot deliver myself from my enemies. I cannot provide for myself what I need. I cannot guide myself into my desired future. I cannot sustain myself. I cannot give myself help. I cannot ensure my children's success. God, I'm depending on You. In all my life and in all I have, I depend on Your grace, Your goodness and Your mercy."

That's what it means to humble yourself under His mighty hand. If you will do that, you will find a God Who is not only mighty, but merciful; a God Who is eager and active to pour out grace and goodness in your life.

Someone might be here today who is living independently of God, living as if God doesn't exist—or if He does, He has no real bearing on your life. Through these verses, God is speaking to you today. God is saying to you, "Turn from that foolishness. Don't live in that folly any longer." God is calling you to a life of wisdom. Wisdom is recognizing your dependence on Him. Humble yourself under His mighty hand and don't forget your dependence on Him.

In Deuteronomy 8:17 (ESV), Moses warns, "*Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.'*" Or you could add, "This health, this family, these friends, these comforts or this security." Don't say, "My hand has gotten me this." Don't say, "I have done this for myself. I deserve this." Instead, as verse 18 states, "*You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth,*" or health, family, friendship, security or comfort. It is His hand that did that for you. And why did He do that? "*That he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*"

So to humble yourself is to see yourself as the recipient of covenant blessings from God, as someone who is in a covenant relationship with a mighty and merciful God. Realize that His

infinite resources are being marshalled for your deliverance, defense, provision and blessing, so that, as Peter says, “*He may exalt you at the proper time.*” God is able to use His mighty hand to exalt the humble, then at the proper time, He will exalt those who humble themselves under that mighty hand.

Throughout 1 Peter, we’ve been seeing that the road marked with suffering is the road that leads to glory. It’s the J-curve Paul Miller talks about. The Christian life is a life that goes downward in humiliation and daily deaths, but it’s a life that leads upward from humiliation into exaltation and glory. Just as it ended for Jesus, so will it end for Jesus’ followers. His head, once crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now, and our heads—who are humbled under His mighty hand—will, when Jesus returns at the proper time, be crowned with everlasting joy in His presence.

Peter himself learned to put this teaching into practice. When you read the Gospels, humility is probably not the first word you would use to describe the Apostle Peter. He was a man who had too much confidence in himself. But he learned through painful failures to depend on the Holy Spirit and trust in Jesus Christ alone. In a short time after he writes these words to the churches in Asia Minor, Peter is going to find himself under the power of the Roman Emperor, in prison, sentenced to death—death on a cross.

The Apostle Peter is going to say, “Don’t crucify me the way they crucified Jesus. I’m not worthy of that. Turn me upside down. Let my head face the ground.” He died in that humiliating posture, with the knowledge that he would soon be raised in everlasting glory and exaltation in the presence of Jesus. He has actually lived these words he preaches to us.

So the first point we’re seeing this morning is that true humility is living under the mighty hand of God, keeping His power, goodness, grace and mercy constantly in view, knowing that His mighty hand is able to exalt the humble at the proper time. Humility can only thrive when God is in view. Humility requires an awareness of God’s presence. That’s the first point.

## **The presence of humility promotes the absence of anxiety.**

Now, I said earlier, there’s a vital connection between humility and anxiety. I said the secret to overcoming fear and anxiety is to humble yourself. Verse seven shows us how this works and is our second point this morning: the presence of humility promotes the absence of anxiety.

How is it that the presence of God-centered humility promotes the absence of self-centered anxiety? Well, it’s not that humble people don’t have anxieties. It’s not that humble

people are aloof to the problems of this world. It's not that they just don't care. It's not that they've reached some state of nirvana. No. In fact, it's often the people who have the deepest humility who also experience the fiercest battles with anxiety.

Just think about the humblest man who ever walked this earth. Do you remember how deeply distressed and troubled in His soul Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane? Our Savior knew extreme anguish and anxiety in His soul. Then there's the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11. He details all the trials he endured for the sake of the gospel. Then he caps it all off with these words in verse 18 (ESV): *"And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches."*

It's not that growing in humility will simply make anxiety vanish or evaporate. No, it's that the humble know what to do with their anxiety. They don't carry it. They don't coddle it. They cast it. That's what makes the difference. Look closely at the connection between verses six and seven: *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God...casting all your cares on him."*

Some versions turn this into two sentences, giving verse seven the force of an imperative, another command: "Cast all your anxieties on Him." That's grammatically possible. But it's better translated as one compound sentence, because verse seven is a participle, a subordinate clause. We see that in the "ing" at the end of the verb "cast." It's like I would have said to my children years ago, "Help your mother with the groceries, carrying in the heavy bags." I'm telling them, "That's how you're to help your mom." Or "Drive safely, keeping your eyes on the road."

Likewise, *"Humble yourselves...casting all your cares on him."* The evidence that the humility of verse six is present in your life is that the practice of verse seven is active in your life. Verse seven is telling us how to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. We humble ourselves by casting our cares on Him.

So carrying your anxiety or coddling your anxiety might actually be an expression of pride. It might actually be a way of saying, "You know what? I cannot trust anyone to handle this burden better than myself, not even God." What can we do that shows God we are really trusting Him and not trying to handle everything ourselves? We cast our cares on Him.

Let's talk about casting. Here's a word that has about 20 different meanings in the English language. Just look it up in the dictionary. But in the Greek, there's only one other time this particular verb is used in the New Testament. It's in Luke 19:35 when the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus so He could ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Here's what it says:

*“Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their clothes on the colt, they helped Jesus get on it.”* They threw their clothes—all their luggage—on that donkey. They cast it on the donkey and from that point on, the donkey carried the weight of all their clothes on its back. They did not need to carry it any longer.

That’s what God wants us to do with our cares, with the things we worry about. God is saying to us, “I want to be your great burden-bearer. Let Me carry you. Let me bear your burdens.” God is not, first and foremost, a task-master. The God of the Bible is a burden-bearing God. The God of the Bible is a God Who, before He asks you to do a thing for Him, to work for Him, says, “Let Me work for you. Let Me do it for you.”

Don’t you want to know a God like that? Don’t you want to trust a God like that? He wants us to throw our cares—the weight of our sin, the weight of our trials, the weight of our concerns—completely on Him. He is able to carry them. So what does this look like?

Mrs. Holloway did a great job describing this in the children’s lesson. She said, “In order to throw something, you first have to have it in your hand.” It’s got to be something you’re hanging on to. You can’t throw a ball if you don’t have it in your hand. So the first step to casting your cares on to God is to recognize, “There are things that are troubling me. There are things I’m hanging on to. I’m worried. I care about these things.” Maybe it’s things like getting sick, or a family member getting sick, or getting a bad grade in school, or losing something. It might be being afraid of the storms or the dark, or being afraid of being alone. These are understandable cares and worries that we have.

We’ve seen throughout 1 Peter that as Christians there’s an additional concern. As followers of Jesus in this world, we are going to suffer unjustly. We’ve been seeing that throughout this letter.

So God understands there are things that worry and bother us. Life is troubling. But He offers to His followers this wonderful gift. He’s saying, “If you could learn to stop bearing those cares yourself, if you could learn to start throwing those cares on Me, there would be a peace and a freedom and a joy in your life that could only be explained through My presence.”

Why is that so hard? Well, if you throw a ball, you’re giving up control of that ball. It’s not going to come back to you, unless you’ve got it tied to a string or you go looking for it. The same is true for the things we worry about. It’s hard for us to cast our cares because we have to give up control of them. And some things are harder to throw because they’re heavier. God wants to train His children to be like “anxiety discus throwers.” He wants us to throw all the

heavy things on Him as well. This throwing of our cares on the Lord actually requires the energetic effort of faith.

Charles Spurgeon said it like this:

Here is a work worthy of faith. You will have to lift with all your soul before the burden can be shifted and the anxiety cast upon the Lord. That effort, however, will not be half as exhausting as the effort of carrying the load yourself.

So how does this work? Well, it requires two things—prayer and faith.. Prayer is the act of naming to God the things that burden you, the things that concern you, asking Him to help you with those things. Faith is trusting that He is able and willing to do it. That’s how we cast our cares: prayer and faith. Prayer is laying the source of your anxiety before God—whether it’s just a little thing or a huge thing.

This past week, I noticed I was starting to feel anxious about something. At first I didn’t even consciously know what it was I was anxious about; I just felt it in my stomach. That’s where it always starts for me. Then it kind of crawled up my chest into my throat. I just felt it. I paused, then I soon realized what had triggered that anxiety. I tried to just keep on working, but it was still there distracting my mind.

So I stopped and named my anxiety to the Lord. It seemed a little silly to me, because it was actually such a small thing, but I told Him I was feeling anxious about it and asked Him to help me. Within moments the distraction was gone. I tell you this because sometimes I think we let these little things just pile up, thinking, “Oh, that’s too small. I should be able to handle that myself. I don’t need to talk to God about that.” We’re embarrassed to mention it. But nothing we care about is too small to mention to God.

One of the Puritans said, “All that creates anxiety, whether momentous or trivial, is a matter of concern to Him.” He cares about the little things and the big things.

I know there are times when anxiety can put our minds into such a fog we don’t even know how to name what it is we’re anxious about. We can’t see clearly what’s bothering us. I think we need to just start with telling the Lord, “I am in a cloud. I am in a fog so thick I can’t even see what’s troubling my mind right now. But I’m going to be still before You. I’m asking You, Lord, to help me understand and name before You all the things that are troubling me, then to cast them on You.”

I heard a powerful interview this week by Joni Eareckson Tada. She had that diving accident when she was 17 years old; she's now 70. So for 53 years she has lived as a quadriplegic. She's had two bouts with cancer in the last decade. In this interview she said:

Every morning I wake up and I pretty much say to the Lord Jesus, "I cannot believe I've got to do this again. I am so tired of quadriplegia and pain. I am so weary. I can't do this, Jesus—but You can. I have no strength for today—but You do. I have no smile for the day—but You do, Jesus. Let me borrow Your smile, Jesus. I cannot do quadriplegia, but I can do all things through You as You strengthen me."

As I was listening to that, I thought, "What a beautiful example of casting your cares on the Lord." So, friends, how are you doing with casting? When a worry or care rises up in your mind, do you trust that God is able to catch the thing you're carrying around—or do you hold on to it?

A few years ago on a really cold, dark January night, we went with our kids to Cold Stone Creamery. You might wonder, "Why in the world would you go out for ice cream on a cold, dark January night?" Well, because we're four-seasons-ice-cream connoisseurs in our family. The weather doesn't matter; it's always a good time for ice cream. We pulled into the parking lot, our kids got out first and started running toward the store. I was getting out last and as I stepped out of the car, I heard my son yell, "Dad! Catch!" I turned around, but I couldn't see the icy snowball he had hurled like a projectile straight toward me. Nate has a great hand. I couldn't see it coming, but I caught it all right—right in my mouth. I'm lucky I still have my teeth.

I tell you this story because we don't always catch the things the kids throw on us. We can't always handle or carry their burdens. But who is it that Peter says we are to be casting our cares on? We are to be casting our cares on a Father in heaven Who is never caught off guard, Whose hand is mighty, Who is able to catch what we throw His way. His eye is alert and He's always paying attention when we call on His name. He won't fumble what we cast on Him.

*"Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you,"* Psalm 55:22 says. He says to us in Isaiah 46:4 (ESV), *"Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save."*

The last part of 1 Peter 5:7 tells you why you can depend on Him and trust Him to catch and carry any worry you have, whether it's big or small. Peter says, *"Casting all your anxieties on him,"* why? *"Because he cares about you."* You are the object of His concern, care and

constant attention. He feeds the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10-11). The oceans teeming with fish and the enormous swarms of insects rely on Him for their provision. His eye is on every little sparrow, and not one of them falls to the ground apart from His notice (Matthew 10:26-33). The galaxies, planets and stars are all sustained by His command. He didn't need our counsel or wisdom to frame the earth, to make the mountains rise, to spread the flowing seas abroad or build the lofty skies. He did all that by His almighty power and He did it with ease—and He cares for us.

Charles Spurgeon wrote:

The Lord thinks about us, plans for us, arranges for us, studies to make things right for us. And these are poor words with which to describe His care, for He does more than that. He loves us. That great, boundless, mighty heart of God loves us. Because He has set His love upon us, we can surely cast our care upon Him.

- He has given us Christ—will He not give us bread?
- He has called us to be His sons and daughters—will He starve His children?
- See what He is preparing for us in heaven—will He not enable us to bear the burdens of this present life?

Yes, He will.

I say to you, friend, isn't this the kind of God you want to get to know? Isn't this kind of God you want to trust? If you're just hearing about Him today for the first time, and something's welling up in your heart, saying, "I need to know this God," I want you to know that this Father's arms are open wide to you. The Father is calling you home to Himself through what Jesus Christ has done for you. You can know and trust this God.

So let's practice casting our cares on Him today. What did you bring with you into this church meeting this morning? What's been troubling your mind this week? Can you name one thing? Two things maybe? Maybe just a little thing or a great thing. What is it? Will you humble yourself before the Lord? Will you acknowledge that He is your God and He is your King? Do you know that you belong to Him and He has never let you down or given you a reason not to trust Him?

He's calling you to cast that care on Him. Know that He's a patient Father. He understands it takes practice to throw a ball well and He knows it takes practice to learn to cast our cares on Him. So when the anxious thoughts come back to oppress you this week, don't beat up on yourself because you're struggling with anxiety once again. "Here I go for the zillionth

time, God. When am I ever going to get the hang of this?” No, God does not want you to be anxious about your anxiety. God is not ashamed of your weakness.

So humble yourself again and again. Acknowledge before Him how weak and needy and limited you are, but how big and strong and mighty He is. You don't have an absentee father. You don't have a distant savior. You don't have a hands-off spirit. You have a Father Who is right there, a Savior Who is here and a Holy Spirit Who's closer to you than your own body and breath. *“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him, for he knows what we are made of, remembering that we are dust”* (Psalm 103:13-14).

We're just frail children of dust and feeble as frail. He did not withhold His own Son from us, but gave Him up for us all. Oh, how He loves you. Oh, how He cares for you. And there's nothing your God cannot do for you. Even the wind and the waves obey His voice. So cast your cares on Him and be still.

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