

## **Willing & Eager: 1 Peter 5:1-11**

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Not under compulsion, but willingly....not for greed, but eagerly. Willing and eager.

What are you willing and eager to do? Take a moment to tell your neighbour. Are you always up for a round of golf, hugs from the grandkids, money to a good cause, savouring a sweet fruit, sing, dance....?

Peter has a specific list in mind. Some instructions for the persecuted churches in Asia Minor whom he is writing:

- Be an example
- Clothe yourself with humility
- Cast your cares upon God
- Resist evil

Cultivate these habits not because of coercion, duty, selfishness nor personal gain. Do these things willingly and eagerly. Joyful, voluntary service.

*Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.*

Be an example. It's what we ask of our elders. Where example doesn't mean perfection, but intentionality. Authority to lead comes from authenticity - aligning what we believe with how we act. To be worthy of imitation. And while those who fulfill the role of eldership take on being an example as they tend the flock, all disciples of Jesus are called to be examples of faithfilled intentionality, authenticity, and actions worthy of imitation. I remember a devotional booklet years ago posing the question: If the whole church acted like you, would the church be stronger or weaker?

Be examples to the flock. Encourage one another by your words and actions. Show others how difficulties are faced, honesty is practiced, repentance is undertaken, love is shown, and faithfulness is enacted. Willingly and eagerly.

*And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another...*

Willingly and eagerly clothe yourselves with humility. Strong's Greek dictionary describes this work as "the deliberate refusal to advance oneself, coupled with a readiness to esteem God and others above self.

One story frequently told about Tommy Douglas, then premier of SK. After a public meeting where staff tried to move him quickly past a long line of people wanting to talk, Douglas stopped and said that if people had waited to speak with him, then he should wait for them too. He stayed late listening individually to concerns, even though many conversations were small and offered him no political advantage. Douglas refused to place personal importance above others, valuing people regardless of status, and choosing service over self-promotion.

Biblical humility never means self-hatred; it means conscious dependence on God's mercy and strength. Clothing ourselves means we take time to examine motives, confess pride, and choose the value of others. In an era of self-branding and digital self-promotion, this challenges us to resist curating an image and

instead pursue Christlike servanthood. Ministries thrive when staff, volunteers, and congregants value hidden faithfulness over platform visibility.

*Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.*

Greco-Roman society was fraught with economic uncertainty, patron-client pressures, and political instability. Stoic philosophers advocated apatheia (detachment), while popular religion offered fatalism - the philosophical belief that all events are predetermined by fate or destiny, rendering human choices powerless to alter outcomes. . The gospel charted a unique path: freedom from crippling care not by indifference or despair but by confident trust in a personal, sovereign Father.

Peter does not say:

“Ignore your anxiety.”

“Pretend everything is fine.”

“Good Christians never worry.”

He says: Cast it.

The image is forceful. It means to throw something onto another because you are no longer able to carry it yourself. In the Bible, anxiety means a mental preoccupation that pulls the heart in different directions.

Peter urges the church to one direction - toward God.

Peter is saying:

Take the weight that is crushing you and place it onto God.

Not because your fears are imaginary.

Not because your struggles are insignificant.

But because God cares for you.

Legitimate concern, when submitted to Christ, becomes intercession, planning, and sacrificial service rather than fretfulness. The character of God dislodges choking anxiety.

After surviving imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp, Corrie Ten Boom often spoke about the lingering weight of fear, grief, and painful memories. On one occasion, she described struggling with anxiety late at night over responsibilities and future uncertainties. Unable to sleep, she finally prayed and said something like, “Lord, You’re going to be up all night anyway, so I’m giving this problem to You.”

Simple as it sounds, that became one of her lasting lessons about trust. She compared worry to carrying a heavy suitcase God never intended us to drag alone.

Corrie was not speaking from a comfortable life untouched by suffering. She had experienced profound loss and cruelty. Yet she learned that “casting your cares upon God” did not mean pretending troubles were small — it meant believing God’s care was greater than the burden itself.

The God who created galaxies... cares for you.

The God who raised Jesus from the dead... cares for you.

The God who rules history... cares about the burdens you carried into church this morning.

With gladness and trust, with willingness and eagerness, may we cast our cares upon God who cares for us.

*Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist...*

The Christian life is not naïve optimism. There is spiritual opposition. There are forces that seek to pull us toward despair, division, pride, bitterness, and fear.  
And anxiety can become fertile ground for spiritual discouragement.

When we are overwhelmed, we become vulnerable to hopelessness, isolation, or believing we are abandoned.

That is why Peter says: “Resist... steadfast in your faith.” How do we resist?

Martin Luther endured intense periods of spiritual fear, doubt, and temptation during the years of the Reformation. Friends recorded that when he felt overwhelmed by accusing thoughts or despair, he would answer aloud with passages of Scripture he had memorized.

One anecdotal story tells of a night when Luther felt crushed by thoughts that his work was failing and that he was unworthy before God. Instead of surrendering to the spiral of fear, he repeatedly recited verses about God’s grace and Christ’s victory, especially from Psalms and Romans. Those around him later said he spoke Scripture almost like a soldier using a weapon in battle.

Luther once wrote that the devil “cannot endure Scripture.” His practice was not merely intellectual memorization; he experienced that filling the mind with God’s Word weakened the lies, accusations, and distortions that temptation depends on. I have found the same to be true.

*...after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.*

The Christian hope is not that we are strong enough. The Christian hope is that God is faithful enough. Peter calls him: “the God of all grace.” Not some grace. All grace.

Grace for failure.

Grace for doubt.

Grace for grief.

Grace for endurance.

Grace for anxious hearts.

And this grace comes through Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.

As we conclude this five-week journey through 1 Peter, perhaps Peter leaves us with this central truth: The Christian life is not about pretending to be fearless. It is about learning to trust the One who holds us.

Easter is not merely the proclamation that Christ rose long ago. Easter means the risen Christ is alive now. Alive to intercede.... to shepherd... to sustain.

The resurrection means anxiety does not get the final word.

Sin and evil do not get the final word.

Death does not get the final word.

Christ does.

May we respond with willingness and eagerness. Amen.