

On Edge | Freedom from Anxiety

Aaron Brockett | Lamentations 3:1-24

I don't know if any of you saw this story from Six Flags in Texas a few years ago, but there was a roller coaster that got stuck upside down mid-flip. It doesn't take much for me to look at this picture and just sort of feel on edge. Like I can just imagine what it might have felt like to be sitting in this position and you're just feeling stranded, fearful, vulnerable, and not quite sure how you are going to get out of this particular situation.

That's just fear-inducing and anxiety producing for me just to look at that, and I like roller coasters. Over the years we've taken our family to amusement parks and I oftentimes go on a roller coaster with my kids. When we get done we'll go over to the little booth where they take a picture of you in your worst possible moment. We've purchased a few of those.

This is from a few years ago. This is me and my daughter, Campbell. She is 14 now, and was probably six or seven in this picture. She's actually having a lot more fun that it appears. I don't think I'm going to win any dad-of-the-year awards with this image right here.

To be fair, over fall break we went to another amusement park, and Campbell loves roller coasters. She wanted to go on one and we went on a really big one. We stopped at the booth and looked at the picture, and something strange has happened. I'm to the age now where I was the one who looked terrified, and she had both arms up in the air looking like she was having a great time. You'll never know, because I didn't purchase that picture. I just got this one.

You know, life can be sort of like this, can't it? Life is a little bit like a roller coaster with lots of ups and downs and unexpected twists and turns. It kind of flips us upside down every now and then. I think what can make it even more challenging is maybe we're on this roller coaster of life and we're sort of fearful of what's going on around us or ahead of us, but then when we look around to the people we're doing life with, they look like they are having a great time.

It's kind of like, "What's wrong with me? Why can't I enjoy life the way they are?"

So today and next week we're going to pause before the holidays and do a short two-part series of messages on the very heavy, but very relevant subjects of depression and anxiety.

Before we get started I just want you to know that one of the things I will often do when I am preparing a message is after I've studied, prayed, and done a bunch of writing to develop content, I'll push myself back from the computer and I'll stand up and begin to walk around. I will imagine, "What would I be thinking or feeling or asking if I were sitting where you're sitting

right now?" I think I've done that more intentionally this week with this particular message with the sensitivity of this topic.

Maybe some of you knew we were talking about this today, and you've been ready for it and excited to hear what God might say to us today from it. But I'm under no illusion all of us would be.

Maybe there's somebody here today who didn't know we were talking about this; it's just the day you decided to come and check it out, come visit, and right now you're sort of looking for the exits. You're like, "Man preacher, if you start saying something weird or make me uncomfortable, I'm out of here."

Can I just say, "I hear you, I know?"

Maybe some of you came today because you've been getting this invite from somebody you know and you're a bit of a people pleaser, so you told them yes even though you really didn't want to come. So here you are.

Can I just reassure you that what I want to accomplish today is three things? First of all, I want you to feel encouraged, but don't move past that too quickly. I want you to feel encouraged. The second thing is I want you to know what God's Word has to say about this subject. It turns out he is far from silent on it. He has a lot to say. And the third thing, I want you to walk out of here today regardless of what campus you might be joining us from, and I want you to feel some hope. I want you to hold onto hope.

I also want you to know I'm not a doctor. I'm not a psychiatrist. I'm not even a very good counselor. Don't tell anybody I said that. But those of you who have come to me for counseling, you'd probably agree. "Yeah, he's not so great. I've had better advice from a fortune cookie." That's actually truer than I want to admit.

So I'm none of those things. I am a human being, and I'm a pastor, and I've been through this. I've experienced what we're talking about today and next week. People around me, the ones who are close to me, they've experienced it. I know what this can feel like. I just want you to know you're not alone.

Let me just kind of give a definition or a description of what we mean by anxiety, so that way we're all on the same page.

Anxiety: a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.

Now under that definition, this is all of us. We all fit underneath this in the spectrum somewhere in some way. If we were to ask some of the questions why, I think one of the contributing factors would be the high-pressured, fast-paced world in which we now live.

A psychologist by the name of Robert Lee says it this way.

"The average American teenager today exhibits the same level of anxiety the average psychiatric patient did in the 1950's. We live in an age of anxiety. We have become a nation of nervous wrecks." Robert Lee, Anxiety Free

And I think we look at some of the reasons around us, and one of them is just stress. The Harvard Business Review says 60-90% of medical visits can be traced to stress-related issues in our lives.

One is the use of cell phones and social media. I'm not down on cell phones and social media. I have them both, and I think they are great tools. I think they are incredible inventions. I love that we can stay connected and you can Facetime your grandkids across the country and check Instagram and see what your friends are doing.

But I think all of us would agree that we have crossed the line. I'm not sure when, but it is becoming an unhealthy thing. We have never been more connected to other people than we are today, but at the same exact time never felt more isolated.

It's like this really dark place that we can go to. We're at home by ourselves on a Saturday night and we open up Instagram. We don't even think about it, but we start scrolling. And there we are sitting in our pajamas with a stain on the front, and we see our friends on some exotic trip to Vegas or the Bahamas and all of the sudden we start to think, "What's wrong with me? Where's my life going? What am I doing wrong? And why am I not with them? Why didn't I get the invite?"

We get this serious case of FOMO. I didn't cuss right there. That's Fear Of Missing Out. And it just sort of produces this anxiety we didn't have a few years ago.

A guy by the name of Stephen Ilardi says this about our lifestyles.

"We were never designed for the sedentary, indoor, socially isolated, fast food laden, sleep deprived, frenzied pace of modern life." Stephen Ilardi, The Depression Cure

Stress is a common thing we're all going to experience in our lives. There is no getting out of stress. What can happen is stress turns into stressful days. And if we don't do anything about it then stressful days become long-term stress. And then long-term stress, if we don't do anything about it, becomes extreme stress. There is a technical term for it. It's called stress-induced analgesia.

Basically, this means we start living with stress for so long over a certain period of time that we just begin to assume this is our norm, that it's normal to feel this way. Yet it is not normal. What it is doing is slowly depleting our mind.

Our mind is beginning to get exhausted and broken down to this place where we begin to experience painful anxiety. And if you leave painful anxiety unchecked long enough, you can find yourself in this pit of depression. And you're not quite sure how to get out.

So let me define depression for us.

Depression: a mood disorder characterized by anhedonia, or the inability to experience pleasure, extreme sadness, poor concentration, sleep problems, loss of appetite, and feelings of guilt, helplessness, and hopelessness.

And this is just rampant throughout our society today. If I just read that and you can see yourself in part of that description or all of it, I just want you to know that you are not alone. And the spectrum of anxiety and depression, all of us find ourselves on it somewhere. All of us know what it feels like to be a little anxious because traffic is bad in the morning and we're going to miss our meeting.

Some of us know what it is like to feel anxious and not know why. We just woke up and we feel sad or blue. And for others of us, maybe we've been diagnosed with something much more serious. Maybe we have a mental illness or disorder or we're experiencing depression due to some sort of trauma or abuse in our past.

When I say trauma or abuse I'm not necessarily talking about the physical kind. I'm talking about the emotional kind, which many times is just as damaging if not more. What I mean by emotional trauma, especially for those of us in our formative years in the homes of our origin, maybe somebody you really needed in your life to give you those words of affirmation or meet those emotional needs—sort of like nutrients for the root system of our lives—you really needed that person to say something to you, but they never said it. You just really needed your dad to say he was proud of you, but he would never say it. You really needed your mom to say she loved you and you were enough, but she would never say it.

And maybe somebody said something to you and it was unintentional but emotionally traumatizing. Here is the thing. As a young child in your formative years you haven't developed the skills to evaluate and dismiss. You just receive it like a sponge. It just gets imprinted on your soul and you develop these neural pathways and this is how you think and see yourself based upon the words of others or the lack of words of others.

I just want you to know that if that's you, I'm right there with you. You are not alone.

And others of us, maybe you've been diagnosed with some sort of mental illness. The unfortunate thing is that mental illnesses and disorders are sort of taboo, a stigma, not only in our society but also in the church. Tragically, it's been magnified at times in the church.

So maybe you confided in a pastor or a Sunday school teacher, a group leader, or a youth group leader and they looked at you like you were crazy or they didn't know what to say or got uncomfortable and tried to explain it away with trite little responses like, "Just pray more," or "you just need to have a stronger faith." Or maybe worse yet they kicked you when you were down and said, "Is there any unconfessed sin in your life? Maybe that's why you're feeling all this anxiety. You've got some unconfessed sin and God is trying to get your attention."

None of that is helpful. Let me tell you that you are not going to hear any of that from this stage this week or next. What the stigma has done is reinforced in your mind that, "There is something wrong with me." Listen, it's not a sin to be sick. We've got to put an end to that stigma in Jesus' name.

You would never think less of somebody who had some sort of physical ailment like the flu, a pulled muscle, or a broken leg. You would just go, "You're hurting or sick, but there is nothing wrong with you."

The pain of a depleted mind is just as real as the pain of a broken leg. So many times we think it is painful to get help or medical treatment, but it's not. I think many times when we find ourselves in that place and others say to us, "Just snap out of it. Just be positive. Just think good thoughts," it's kind of like, "I can't." Or you're like, "God, please take this from me," and you've prayed that and it doesn't feel like God is taking it from you. Can I just say that more than likely God won't take it from you, but he will heal you from it and healing is the word.

Here is what I want you to know about healing. Healing is a process, a pathway. Depression isn't so much a pit as it is a tunnel. Tunnels and pits are both dark. Tunnels have a way out. So God will meet you in that place and help you heal.

It's just like you have a broken leg. You don't say, "God, please take this from me." No, you're like, "God will heal me from it." How? Well, by going to the hospital, getting the bone reset and that is painful, then getting a cast put on. That is uncomfortable and inconvenient. Then after that maybe walking with crutches for a while and doing some physical therapy and getting to this place where you build the strength back. It doesn't happen overnight. It's a healing process.

And mental illness and even the depletion of our minds works in the same way. God will meet you in it and heal you by helping you walk out of it.

Let's look at what God's Word actually has to say about this. One of the things that might surprise you is that a lot of whom we might think of as the heroes of the faith in the Bible really struggled with anxiety and depression. That's true with heroes in history.

Did you know Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, and even the great preacher Charles Spurgeon all wrestled with anxiety and depression? There is actually a whole book of the Bible devoted to a guy name Jeremiah airing out his feelings of anxiety and depression. It's called Lamentations. And the word means to lament.

Listen to how he describes his state of mind in chapter 3 starting in verse 2.

“He has led me into **darkness**, shutting out all light.” What is he saying? Well anxiety and depression feels like darkness. I look all around and don’t know where to go. “He has turned his hand against me **again** and **again**, all day long.” What’s he saying? This feels relentless. When is it going to ever let up? He says, “He has made my skin and flesh grow old.” What is he saying? “This is aging me. I feel like I got all these miles put on my physical body because of these emotions I feel.”

He goes on in verse 5.

“He has besieged and surrounded me with **anguish** and **distress**.” In other words, “I’m surrounded by these emotions and I don’t know how to get free from them.”

On down in verses 17-18 it says this.

“Peace has been **stripped away**,” like I’ve had something taken from me, “and I have forgotten what prosperity is. I cry out,” and notice that Jeremiah is telling us what he has been saying to himself. That’s why it’s in quotes. “My splendor is gone! Everything I had hoped for from the Lord is lost!”

What he is doing here is what a lot of psychologists call:

ruminating

Ruminating is negative self-talk. What Jeremiah just said there was real because it was what he felt, but it wasn’t true. Ruminating is this idea kind of like a cow that chews his cud. He eats the grass, chews it, regurgitates it, chews it again, and swallows it. Many of us can do this with negative thinking—negative self-talk.

So we are just sort of ruminating on some of these false narratives or toxic stories. Do you ever do that? Do you ever get alone by yourself and start thinking, “Why did she say that? What did he mean by that? Why didn’t they do this? What was I thinking then?” and you just start ruminating.

Listen, it’s real because it’s emotions. Emotions are real, but it doesn’t mean it is true.

I was watching a documentary about ten years ago called *The Bridge*. In 2004 there was a film crew who set up cameras on either side of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco for other purposes. What they unintentionally caught was several people committing suicide by jumping off the bridge.

And they created this documentary where they told the stories of the people who had jumped. Obviously many of them passed away, but not all of them did. And there was one young man, a teenager, who had jumped off the bridge and survived and they were catching his story on the documentary.

He talked about the fact that he was doing a lot of self-talk and ruminating and I would call it a toxic story he was telling himself. He was in pain. He was depressed. He woke up one morning and faked being sick so his dad would let him stay home from school. When his dad left he packed up his things and bought a bus ticket.

He jumped on the bus and took it to a local Walgreens where he purchased what he thought was his last meal. It was a candy bar and a Mountain Dew. That sounds like a teenager. He gets back on the bus, goes to the Golden Gate Bridge, and walks to the middle. It was a beautiful day but he stands there in all this anguish and pain doing all this self-talk. He feels so isolated and alone.

He stood there trying to get the nerve to jump. This tourist group from Asia walks up behind him and taps him on the shoulder. Just oblivious to what he was going through, they said, "Would you take our picture?" There they were on vacation having a great time. It was like that feeling on the roller coaster, "Why are all these people having such a great time and I'm in pain? And why don't they see it?"

He grabs the camera, takes their picture, and hands it back. They smile, "Thanks so much." They turn and walk away. Right then he said, "Forget it," with language much stronger than that, and he jumped over the rail.

He said as soon as he cleared the rail and was hurtling towards the water, his mind cleared. Right then and there he realized, "I don't want to die." As he is hurtling towards the water he cried out to God, which he said shocked him because he didn't even believe in God. He said, "God, if you're real, if you're there, please spare my life." He hits the water.

He survived, but a moment or two later he came to and he said sea lions were bumping his body up towards the surface of the water. I don't know what to do with that. I'm not going to be the preacher who says, "God sends the sea lions into your life." Did God send them? I don't know if he sent the sea lions. That's not even the amazing thing about that story.

The amazing thing about that story was that as soon as he cleared the rail, his mind cleared. He was ruminating on all this destructive self-talk and then as soon as he jumped he could think clearly. This is simply my opinion, and you may not agree with it, but especially if you were here last week when we talked about how we have an enemy who likes to deceive and lie, I think he had him deceived and as soon as he cleared the rail he said, "Sweet, he is mine," and he cleared the clouds and he could think.

If you're in this space and place where you've been ruminating and listening to yourself too much, and maybe it has even brought you to this place where you might even do something destructive, can I just urge you to think again? Yes, those waves of anguish are very real but they are waves. Just like they come crashing, they will recede.

You are not alone. You're not alone right now in this room, even though you may feel like it.

Paul even says this in his letter to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 1:8.

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia." In other words, he is like, "I want you to know that it might appear as if I've got everything together but I don't. We've actually gone through a lot of trouble."

"We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we **despaired of life itself**. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death."

And Paul says, "We were going through this pain and anguish, but from outside appearances it may have seemed like we had our life all together." Can I just tell you that nobody's life is as good as it seems on Instagram?

What you are looking at is an image. It was probably the 25th or 26th take, carefully placed, carefully filtered. And you are comparing your low moments with their carefully crafted highlight reel. I'm not saying they are lying; I'm just saying it is not as it appears.

So Paul says, "Don't be mistaken. Don't allow this destructive self-talk to take you to a place where you might do something permanently damaging."

If I could just give a definition of suicide, it is this:

Suicide is a permanent, irreversible attempt to solve a temporary problem.

Is what you are feeling real? Absolutely it is real, but that's not the answer. And if you're wrestling with that right now I would encourage you to call the suicide prevention hotline number. Reach out, get some help today, and don't stay there.

You see these thoughts receded for Jeremiah. Let's not leave him hanging. Let's go back to chapter 3 verse 21.

"Yet I still **dare to hope** when I remember this: The faithful love of the Lord never ends!" I don't know if he believed that yet, but I think he said it and that's the place to begin. "His mercies never cease. Great is their faithfulness; his mercies begin **afresh** each morning. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, **I will hope in him!**'"

You might find yourself in a pit where you don't exactly know where to go. But God will meet you in that pit and help walk you out of it a step at a time.

We actually see another example of this from another individual in the Old Testament by the name of Elijah. And I want to look quickly at his story because we see how God meets Elijah in that place and helps him walk out of it, and there are some things we can learn for our lives today.

What you need to know about Elijah is that he was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. He was not a weak guy by any stretch of the imagination. He was a strong guy, and he had experienced this incredible victory in 1 Kings 18 where God showed up in an incredible way. I don't have time to unpack the story for you. Many of you know it. If you want to go back and read it later today it will be worth your time.

In 1 Kings 18 Elijah gets into it with the prophets of the false god Baal. They step into the octagon and God just embarrasses them and uses Elijah to do it. It was an incredible moment of victory for him. That's chapter 18.

In chapter 19 Elijah wrestles with fear, anxiety, and even depression. How did he go from the mountaintop to the valley so quickly? I alluded really briefly to it last week, but that's usually how it works. Do you want to know the moments when I'm actually the most prone or vulnerable to feelings of anxiety or even depression, where I ruminate and do a lot of negative self-talk? Ironically it is Sunday evenings.

It doesn't matter. We could have 10,000 people here on the weekends, 150 baptisms, and all kinds of cool stories of peoples' lives being changed and some neat interactions. I'll go home on Sunday evening tired and depleted, get alone by myself, turn on the football game but only half-watching it, and I'll start ruminating.

We had a great weekend but I'll pick out one little sentence in my message. "Why did I say it that way?" or "Why didn't I say this?" Maybe I'll have a conversation with somebody in the lobby that got awkward or maybe I had an email come in that was really cruel and critical. I'll just start ruminating on all that stuff.

I've actually asked the people who are the closest to me to check on me on Sunday nights. And by "check on me" I don't mean encourage me. Just in a real way say, "How are you doing?" And my wife is one of them. She'll come find me alone, sitting in the dark. She'll walk in and go, "Hey Babe, how are you doing?"

In my honest moments I'll be like, "Well, I'm kind of tired right now. I'm wrestling. I'm a little down." And she'll go, "Come over here, you." I'd love to tell you the rest but it gets really steamy at that point. Come on now. Let's just say it this way. The path out of that pit is well worn. I've even been known to fake it every now and then.

So here is Elijah, experiences this great victory. Look at where we find him in the very next chapter, chapter 19.

“Elijah was afraid,” and the reason he was afraid was that Queen Jezebel threatened his life because of how God had used him. She put a timetable on it. She said, “I’m going to kill you within 24 hours.” That will induce some fear and anxiety.

“He was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on **alone**,” and that’s a mistake, “into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and **prayed that he might die**. ‘I have had enough Lord,’ he said. ‘Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died.’” That’s not true. Why is he saying that? He is ruminating. That’s a toxic story he is telling himself.

“Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree.”

We don’t have a lot of details as to how Elijah got to this particular place in his life, but this caused some stress and anxiety for him. Here are a few things we see from this story that might induce some anxiety and stress in our lives.

The unknown.

He didn’t know what was going to happen to him tomorrow. He didn’t know if he would still be alive.

The unlikely.

It’s unlikely to happen, but you know what? I’m worried and fuming over this. This is where a lot of self-talk goes into the negative.

The uncontrollable.

Elijah couldn’t do anything about it.

The unnecessary comparisons. He is comparing himself to his ancestors.

Listen, that would be all of us. We all find ourselves in these moments where we might be susceptible through those things.

The next thing we see from Elijah is that he isolated himself. Not only did he feel isolated because of his role, and many of you who are leaders in the room, you know that feeling of loneliness even when other people are around, that intangible weight that you carry. He felt that because he was a prophet, but he also physically got alone. He went on this wilderness trip by himself. Just like mold grows in the darkness, depression grows in isolation.

Jesus himself wrestled with anxiety. I think he was wrestling with depression in the garden of Gethsemane the night before his arrest. Why do you think he kept crying out to his disciples, his friends? “Guys, could you stay awake with me?” He didn’t need their prayers. Jesus could out-pray them any day of the week. He needed their companionship. And so do you and I.

It says this in Proverbs.

“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.”

That is one of the reasons why when we gather together just assume that person you meet in the hallway or the lobby or the parking lot, even though you may not know them, is probably weighed down by something. So just offer a cheerful word or expression. You never know how God might use your words to cheer up someone else.

And the last would be this idea:

false narratives

Elijah was just repeating false narratives and toxic stories to himself. We left him under a broom by himself asleep. Look at what happens.

“But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, ‘Get up and eat!’ He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.”

Look at that, all you paleo people—baked bread. Give me some gluten in Jesus’ name. God’s answer to my anxiety. Slather that bad boy with honey butter.

So we see here that the angel touched him and said, “You need to eat.” And he ate but was so depleted that he fell asleep again.

Then in verses 6-7, “Then the angel of the Lord came **again** and touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you.’”

And it is easy to miss but we see right here that God was not just tending to Elijah’s emotional condition, but also his physical one. Part of the pathway out of these feelings he was experiencing was his physical needs. Namely he said, “You need some sleep, some rest, some food.” He didn’t say it here in the passage but exercise would be the same sort of thing.

Do you know some studies are saying right now that exercising four times per week for 20 minutes has the same effects as anti-depression medication?

We’ve got to stop to examine some things here. Once again, I’m not a doctor and I know this is very, very complex. I’m going to try to make it as simple as possible. When you are in that pit

you've got to ask yourself, "What are the negative thoughts I'm dwelling on and what are the chemicals that are released because of those negative thoughts?" Because there are.

What are the positive things I need to begin thinking about because your body responds to positive thoughts and puts the chemicals into your brain that can heal you from that depletion. That's not self-help mumbo jumbo. The Bible reassures us of that.

The Bible says, "As you think in your heart, so you become." And in Philippians 4:8 it says this. "Fix your thoughts..." In other words your thoughts won't naturally go there. You've got to be intentional about it.

"Fix your thoughts on what is true," and this is where God's Word comes into play. That you read God's Word and memorize God's Word, not because you're going to be tested on it later but because when your mind starts to go down the path of the negative and you start to ruminate, God's Word puts up a roadblock.

"I know you feel that way, but it isn't true. Turn around and go another way."

"Fix your thoughts on what is honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise."

Why do that? This is not "think yourself into a happier place." This isn't "pull yourself up by your boot straps." There is a chemical thing that happens here. Many of us know there are these things called neurotransmitters. So we've got these chemicals that are associated with these positive, helpful thoughts. Here they are.

dopamine (do something good, accomplish something)
serotonin (healthy foods)
oxytocin (human connection)
endorphin (exercise)

So exercise isn't about getting skinny or building muscle; it's really about mental health. So we've got these things that get released into our brain that help replenish the depletion of our minds, but there are other transmitters that can actually have negative affects—namely cortisol. Cortisol has its purpose, but cortisol is triggered by stress.

So when you have open-ended stress and aren't doing anything to manage it, cortisol is just pumping in, flowing in. And it is slowly depleting your mind. If you don't have those other four combating it, you find yourself over time getting to this place where your mind gets depleted and you can't trust what you're feeling anymore.

So to begin the healing process you've got to manage some of these thoughts, some of these behaviors. Can I get super practical with you towards the end? If you're wrestling with this, get help but get different kinds of help. Not all help is equal. We need good friends; a good

marriage; good relationships; good interaction; the help of a counselor, therapist, or pastor. We need a mentor. We need a group. We need different kinds of help in our lives.

Get help. Get different kinds of help.

Many of us are embarrassed to reach out and say we need help. Can I just say don't wait until it is too late to get counseling? There is this thing called preventative maintenance and it's far better. You don't wait to change the oil in your car until after the engine is blown. Don't wait until you are in the middle of a crisis where things have blown apart before you go back. Don't be too proud to get counseling and get help.

It takes time, so give it time.

And then here is another thing:

You don't have to let it go, just transfer it over.

Some people have watched *Frozen* too many times. You're like, "Shut up." You don't have to let it go, just transfer it over. I think where people get this in 1 Peter 5:7, it says this.

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

They say, "That means let it go." That's not what it says. It says cast. For a long time I got tripped up on that word cast. It's not actually a very good translation of that Greek word. When I think of cast I think of fishing. I've got this problem in my life and I just need to cast it out there.

Do you see the logical problem with that? I'll reel it right back in and there it is again.

The Greek word for cast is a better word. It is transfer. So he says, "Transfer all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." In other words you don't just pray it away. It doesn't just go away. Just transfer it over.

Jesus would say the same thing. He would say, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light. Let me carry it with you. Let me come alongside of you."

The last thing I would simply say is that if you're in this place in your life where you are just feeling hopeless, understand it is a chapter, not the conclusion.

I don't know that I've ever shared this with you from this platform but I remember about 13 years ago. I was in a season of my life where, looking back, I'm pretty confident I was depressed. I didn't know what to call it. I was too proud to get help or to reach out to anybody. I was in this funk for a good while.

A lot of it was because I was working so hard and stressed out, not getting the results that I wanted. Lindsay and I weren't connecting as well as we could have. Largely it was my fault. The cortisol was just flowing in because of all this stress.

I remember getting to this place where I was anxious every day. I was moody. For about six months straight I would wake up every morning about 4:30 in the morning. My eyes would pop open. I would lie there for two hours not looking forward to the day.

I remember it was Halloween 2005. I was feeling anxious all day. Lindsay asked me to come home a little early to help with the kids. We were going to take them out trick-or-treating that night. I walked into the door, went into the kitchen, and kissed her. I went straight to the bathroom, dropped to my knees, opened the toilet, and dry-heaved into the toilet.

I didn't have a virus. I wasn't physically sick in some way. It was anxiety. It was confusing. I had never done that before. I remember Lindsay walked in and she was like, "What is wrong?" I looked up at her and said, "I don't know, but I don't know how to get out of this feeling."

I look back on that time and can say to you today that God healed me from it. That's the word—healed. It wasn't like that next day I got some great news and just snapped out of it. It's a healing process. When I look back I can't exactly put my finger on when it flipped but it did.

You know? It would have been a mistake for me to say, "This is the conclusion. This is the end of my story. This is how it ends for Aaron Brockett." Never put a period where God puts a comma. And many of us simply make that mistake.

That's what makes a story interesting. There is always a place in every movie or in every novel where if you were to put the book down and push pause where you are like, "I don't know how they are getting out of this." But if you were to shut the movie off that would be the conclusion. What makes the movie or the story so good is the resolution to it, and right now some of you are in that chapter.

By the way, we won't just experience one but probably several. God wants to move you beyond it. Can I just say I look back on that season of my life and I'm actually grateful for it? I can see the hand of God sustaining me and how God used it. He never wastes a hurt. And God used it to deepen me, to shape me, and to humble me and give me empathy that I really needed.

In fact in my first few years, it doesn't happen so much anymore, but in my first few years here I had all kinds of people say, "You're awfully young." I don't have that many people say that anymore. I'm not quite sure what to think about that. But they would see how fast the church was growing and they would look at my highlight reel. "It must be good to be you."

And they would say things like, "How do you keep from getting a big head?" or "I don't want to compliment you because I don't want this to go to your head." It would hurt every time. I don't often say this but I can confidently say, "Yes, I need to keep pride in check." There are moments

where I've gotten a little too big for my britches but every time I do God somehow flashes that picture in my mind of me on my knees bowing down to the porcelain bowl. And he says, "You ain't all you think you are. You're pretty weak. You're a human being. You need me."

Listen, the cross of Jesus Christ looked like a period but it was a comma. And if Jesus can come back from that, you can come back from this. And we want to come around you and help you.

So today I just hope you're encouraged. I hope you know you've got a heavenly Father who looks at you and you are more than enough. He smiles and is pleased with you. I hope you walk out of here with some hope and a resolution to say, "I want to get on a path towards healing." Bring somebody with you into that journey.

Father, we come to you right now and thank you for your love and your grace that never leaves us in that pit, but provides a way out of the tunnel. So God, I pray that we would hear resounding words of hope from you by your Spirit that it is not a sin to be sick. Life is a struggle. None of us are immune from anxiety and depression. So we have a great amount of empathy and compassion for anyone who may be struggling with this in a more severe way than we are.

God, we know that hope has a name and his name is Jesus. We cling to you like never before and lend a helping hand to those who are wrestling. I pray you would restore us and bring healing and hope to us, that the church would lead the way because we have the truth of Jesus Christ.

We ask this in Jesus' name. And together the church says, "Amen."