

# Message Transcript

**PLACED ON A FIRM FOUNDATION | WE STAND FIRM**

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Well, it's so good to be with you across all of our locations and anybody who may be joining us online. If you have a Bible head over to 1 Peter, chapter 5 as we get ready to wrap up this series that we've been in together over the last couple of months.

If you happen to be visiting with us man, welcome. We're so thrilled that you are here and now is a good time as we wrap up a series and get ready to head into another one.

To just give you a little bit of a heads up as to where we are headed together as a church family. Next weekend we begin a new series of messages that will go four weeks long through the month of October called, I've Got a Word For You. And what I've done is I've invited four pastors who I believe that God is using in really profound ways to speak into the big "C" church.

But also each of these four individuals has spoken profoundly into my life on a personal basis. They know me pretty well and they know our church family and they pray over what God is doing here. So, I've just asked them to come and I've just said, "Hey, bring us a fresh word from the Lord to our church family." So, you're not going to want to miss this next series. Every single weekend is going to be a highlight.

And in November, as you just saw from the story, we're wrapping up our two year generosity initiative called Awaken so we're going to hit the vision of it one more time for those of you who are brand new so that you know what it's about and for those of you who finished strong. We're going to look at four primary giving passages from the book of Acts, which is the book that tells us about the history of the church.

And then December is our annual big push evangelistic series where I always want you to be inviting friends and family to come—but that specific one. If there is ever a time to invite your one and to be intentional it would be this series we call it At The Movies. It's coming up in December.



I just want you to know that we are going to be spending the bulk of 2026 going verse by verse through the gospel of Mark. And Mark is one of my favorite gospels out of Matthew, Luke, and John. Here's the reason why. If you were to assign a movie genre to each of the gospels, Mark would be the action movie. It's fast paced. It's right to the point. And he highlights the person and work of Jesus. In fact scholar Wes Huff says that Jesus is portrayed as God in every single chapter in Mark.

And I think it is a really important time for us to do this because one of the things that really concerns me is that I hear this division right now among Christians where some will try to recreate Jesus into this sort of secularized, good deeds only version of Him, rather than the truth of how the Scriptures describe Him. And so, we're just going to spend some time getting to know the work and person of Jesus next year.

I've had a number of people ask, "Well, how long is this series going to be?" And I am like, "I don't know. As long as it takes." We'll take a few breaks. Maybe address some other things during the year, but we're just going to go through that verse by verse. All of that is coming up in 2026.

But today we're wrapping up the series we've been in for about nine weeks now called We Stand Firm where we've just been going through 1 Peter verse by verse. And we've just been letting the text set the agenda for what God wants said.

And Peter was writing to encourage a group of first century Christians whose lives had been turned upside down after making the decision to know and to follow Jesus. They were being marginalized, criticized, and cancelled for their faith. Suffering is a big theme through the letter and Peter doesn't say, "If you suffer," he says, "When you suffer. And here's how you suffer well."

So, he writes to them to encourage them for sure, but he does more than encourage. Peter writes to encourage, but equally more so, he writes to equip. He says, "I want to equip you to stand firm for Jesus in the midst of the cultural moment that they were living through.

I pointed out last week that 1 Peter was planned in our teaching series and prayed over well over a year ago. So, I think God, in His sovereignty, knew that we needed this in this moment so that we might be encouraged and equipped to follow Jesus in our day.

So, as we come to chapter 5, I think it's important to note that when reading, not just 1 Peter, but the entire New Testament, that the Bible wasn't written to individuals alone, but was written to collections or communities of individuals known as the church.



It's been said this way. The Bible isn't just written to me; it's written to we. And what that means is that we can't just read the bible in isolation alone. Now, don't get me wrong. I hope that you are reading your Bible every single day, individually. Like, your Daily Bible Reading. I just crossed over into the New Testament in my Bible reading.

And if you read the Bible every day, I hope that it encourages you, challenges you, blesses you, convicts you personally. It's just that it can't be read in isolation alone because you'll misapply it.

As Americans, as westerners, this is really difficult for us because there is this tension. We are all social beings, even the most introverted among, we're still social, we want to be around other people, it's just that we don't want to need people too much. Don't you think that's true? Yeah, three of you agree with that. We're pretty self-sufficient people, especially, I think, when it comes to our faith walk.

Unfortunately, we like to think that we can just kind of do this on our own, that our relationship with God is a personal thing. We just kind of keep it to ourselves. So, we say things like, "Well, my faith is private, I just don't talk about it that much. It's personal with God." Or, "I don't need to go to church to be a Christian. I can meet with and talk to God anywhere."

I would just very lovingly point out, you are right and you are wrong, in the sense that your salvation is not tied to church attendance, your salvation has nothing to do with other people. But your growth does. We need one another. We need each other's gifts. We need other people's discernment. We need people's encouragement.

In fact the author of Hebrews puts it this way, he says, "Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the," and then he uses this word, "habit of doing." You ever notice that whenever you get into a stretch of your life where you stop attending church it becomes a habit? It becomes a habit to go; it becomes a habit not to go.

And maybe you've gotten into this season, a really busy, hectic season with school or work or maybe the kids' travel soccer, or it's warm outside and you've got the lake house—not throwing shade on any of those things. Those are all just a part of life. But maybe you have a season where you get busy, but then you get unbusy and you've fallen out of the habit of being here.



And the book of Hebrews says, "Don't give up meeting together as some of you are in the habit of doing, but let's gather together," not because our salvation is dependent upon that, but he says it this way, "so that we might stir one another up toward love and good works." Do you know what that means?

Encouragement. It means your faith tank is maybe on fumes and you need to come in here and you need to be encouraged by other people's faith.

There are certainly a lot of weekends where that is true for me. This is like my eighth or ninth weekend in a row preaching and I'm feeling okay, but I'm a little bit like on fumes. And I will be down here on the front row. Every single service, if you've ever seen me here on the front row, I oftentimes will look over my left shoulder at the room.

And what I'm doing is, I'm not evaluating your worship—well there is a little bit of that going on, but I'm not evaluating your worship. I'm actually looking to get filled up by your faith. Some of you stir me up so I might get up here. And I've learned the spiritual temperature of the room will oftentimes be directly connected to my potency as a preacher. It's just like I need the stirring up and you know what? You need it too. We cannot do this alone. We need to be stirred up.

Not to mention the fact that Jesus gave us a mission to accomplish, the Great Commission—go and make disciples. Nobody can do that on their own. We need the church to do that together. We need one another to stand firm, especially now in these days.

I'm hoping that you are coming to recognize, now more than ever, how much you need the church. And that is not to say that the church is perfect or problem free. It's not, because it is filled with fallen, broken, sinful people like you and like me. And Peter is going to address that in our text today.

However, whenever I hear people so willingly point out the imperfections of the church I want to say, "Yes that's true. But it's not perfect out there." In fact, may even more so because at least in here we can get our eyes on Jesus, at least in here there is a chance for redemption and hope and confession and repentance.

So, Peter lays out in our final passage here in our study just some structure and some expectations for how we should function as a church. How do we remain healthy as a church in the midst of a really crazy world? Peter is going to dive in here. Look with me at your Bible starting in verse 1. Let's jump in. He says:



And now," these are words of conclusion, "a word," in the singular, "to you who are elders," plural "in the churches." Plural. And then he says, "I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world." (NLT)

So, here's what Peter is doing. He is saving his final words for encouraging and equipping the elders of these churches. We often say we are one church in multiple locations. So were they. They were scattered all over Asia Minor. So, he's talking to the leaders of these churches and he's talking to the Christians who fill these churches.

And he saved his final word for the leaders. I think the reason why is because leaders go first and they would have been at the tip of the spear. If these people were suffering and facing persecution and criticism, then the leaders would have been facing the brunt of it. And he addresses the elders within these churches. So, it begs the question here: What is an elder?

Now, Peter does not give a whole description of who they are in this passage. Other places in the New Testament do. We'll mention that here in just a minute. He is describing in these verses what they do and why they matter.

So, I just want to point out that six of the 11 verses that we are going to cover today in chapter 5 are specifically dealing with the elders in these churches. So, just an observation, I think, unfortunately, oftentimes the only time we ever mention the elders in church from up front is when there is something wrong. You ever notice that? And I think that is unfortunate.

Peter is going to talk about elders proactively and the blessing that God intended for them to be within the church. And this might also be a good time to remind you that we are letting the text set the agenda. In other words here in the next few minutes if you go, "Man, why is Pastor Aaron spending so much time talking about elders?" It's because Peter does. Peter is going to spend six of these 11 verses on this.

So, first what is an elder. Biblically, elders are qualified men who serve as the spiritual overseers of the church as is described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. And they are necessary because there are so many needs within the church. We can't just have everybody heads down doing the ministry. We've got to have some who get their heads up to focus on the direction and the health of the ministry of the church.



And we see that in the book of Acts. In the book of Acts we see the history of the early church as it exploded on the scene. You want to talk about an organizational nightmare, just read Acts 2. Three thousand people all of a sudden give their lives to Jesus and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

And if any of you lead anything you know how much of a systematic problem that would have been. All of these people added overnight and they don't have the systems to take care of them. And immediately there are physical, tangible needs that were being overlooked. Namely, the widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

So, what they did is they provided a little bit of structure. So the spiritual overseers said, "Hey, let's designate some people to focus on the tangible and physical needs of ministry." They weren't exempting themselves from that. They were saying, "Let's make sure this is getting covered so that we don't neglect prayer and the ministry of the Word. Ground game, air game."

I think it's important for you to know, especially those of you who are new around here, that here at Traders Point we have nine elders who are not on staff who serve either in full-time jobs or they are retired. They serve five-year terms as spiritual overseers of our church. And Peter says in the passage that he is an elder as well. So, I would be an elder here as well, counting me that's 10. And I report to and I am held accountable by them. And I just think that's important for you to know.

I said this a few weeks ago, anybody who strives to be in authority needs to be under authority. So, I am under their authority. Now, they don't make day to day decisions or operational decisions, although they are consulted often in them. They don't hire or fire people except for me. But they do provide spiritual oversight. And they primarily oversee four things:

#### **Elders Oversee:**

- **Doctrine/Theology**
- **Vision/Direction**
- **Finances**
- **Me**

They oversee doctrine and theology. They oversee vision and direction. They oversee finances to make sure everything is on the up and up there. And then, finally, they oversee me. They speak into my life. They admonish me appropriately. They hold me accountable. They make sure that I'm staying healthy in all of the metrics: spiritually, mentally, relationally, physically.



They pastor me and care for me so that I can go the distance and pastor and care for our staff and all of you. They make sure that I'm tending to my emotional and spiritual health. And they regularly meet with people in our church to anoint them with oil and to pray.

It's not a perfect analogy but I like to say that a good eldership in a church is kind of like the Navy Seals. They are often felt even if they aren't always seen. And likely you've seen them but you just didn't know who they were. You probably serve next to them. They all serve at a campus. They just don't serve with their elders' t-shirt on.

They serve around here—godly servants. I just need you to know how godly they are. Every year we do a two-day elders retreat off site somewhere. In fact, we like to joke around that we need to change the name from an Elders' Retreat to an Elders' Advance because we don't retreat, we advance.

I, at least, like that. In every service everybody is kind of giving me the same expression. I love that at 8 o'clock there was a lady who laughed out loud at that and then afterward she came up to me and she goes, "I don't know why I laughed. I don't know what that means." Elders don't retreat; we advance.

So, anyway in our two-day off site I just need you to know this. They spent the bulk of one whole morning praying for our entire staff by name—over 200 of them. And then they prayed specifically for all of you and the direction of our church.

None of them would ever advertise this so I'll tell you. Right now they are taking every Tuesday—the first Tuesday of every month—and they are praying and fasting over our pastors and over the direction of our church as the air game. They just know that we are in a spiritual battle.

I've served with many of these guys for my 18 years here. There have been times, you have no idea how they have kept me in the game when I wanted to wave the white flag, tap out, and quit. June of 2020 would be one that most vividly comes to mind. Worst month of my life.

I was ready to give in. I was ready to tap out, ready to quit. And I called the chairman of our elders' board and I said, "Man, I'm hurting right now." And he immediately hung up, got in his car, drove the 20 minutes over to my house, sat with me on my front porch for the better part of an afternoon, and wept and prayed with me. And he is the one who kept me in the game.



Guys, I just want you to know, man, they don't get enough credit. And so we honor them for the way that they serve. They don't get paid to serve. They very rarely get any thanks because they do it behind the scenes, but God is using them in amazing ways and we honor them.

Peter goes on:

"As a fellow elder, I appeal to you:" here it is, here is what they do, they, "Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you."

So, the flock is the church and God has entrusted it to leaders temporarily. And he goes:

"Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it," not just self-promotion type of stuff, "but because you are eager to serve God." (NLT)

So, here's the deal. He says, "Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you." Now, if you remember back earlier in the year when we did Red Letter Talks we were looking at the red letters of Jesus, and Jesus used this analogy to describe shepherd leaders and the church. He said that leaders, or elders, or pastors, are shepherds and that the church is the flock—sheep. That's the analogy that Jesus uses.

And I said that when Jesus calls us His sheep, it's not a compliment. Sheep are a lot of things—self-sufficient isn't one of them. And we said: If a sheep wanders off from the flock what do you call that? A meal. That's what you call it. They need the flock. And they need the care and the oversight of a shepherd who has a staff to keep them within the flock and to guide them to food and water and protect them from wolves that would devour.

Jesus would say, "I am the Good Shepherd. And shepherds lay down their life for the sheep. John, chapter 10, verse 11.

And I just want to be super clear that I am under no illusion... My title might say: Lead Pastor. But I am not the senior pastor of this church. It is not my church. It is God's church. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. I am a temporary under shepherd serving as... I like to call my job temporary stewardship. But I don't want it to become part of my identity because one day I will hand it off. Now, I hope that's not for a good 15 or 20 years, but eventually I will.





The guy that I followed, Howard Brammer, the one word of advice—he gave me a couple of words of advice—but the one thing that he said was he say, “Hey, Aaron. Enjoy it. It will go faster than you think.” Eighteen years later I am like, “He knew what he was talking about.” It has gone by fast. And it is a temporary stewardship. I am an interim pastor here at best.

You know, there are sermons that I wish I had a mulligan on and I sometimes I make poor decisions. I don’t always get it right. I am not perfect. I am just a man. But one day I will stand before God and I will be held accountable for how I pastored you and for how I rightly divided this book. I take that very, very seriously.

Peter says, “Man, this is to be done.” For those of you who aspire toward leadership in any way shape or form, whether that’s the marketplace or, even especially as leaders within the church, he says, “Don’t do this grudgingly. Do it willingly.”

Why do you think that Peter would say that? Well, any one of you who has ever led anything, you likely know why he said that, because leadership is not for the faint of heart. I don’t care if you are leading a small group, if you are leading your family, if you are leading kids in anything, if you are leading an organization or a business. Leadership is not for the faint of heart. It is very, very difficult. I would say that leading in these days that we are in may be more difficult than it has ever been. The last couple of weeks have just simply reminded me of that.

And here’s why. If we are talking about shepherds and sheep—somebody once said it this way, “Sometimes sheep bite.” Sometimes sheep send emails and DMs. Not this service, the other ones. The other ones do. And sometimes we listen to influencers and podcasters and disregard the faithful teaching of our local shepherds.

That is not to say that shepherds are always perfect, but if shepherds have been placed under an anointing by God and they are held accountable to rightly divide this Book, we need to allow their shepherding into our lives.

Trying to pastor people in tragedies and culturally divided issues has just ramped up since 2020, at warp speed. It’s challenging and impossible to do without letting somebody down, angering people, or failing to meet expectations.



One of the things that I've noticed in this day and age in which we live is that oftentimes—I'm not talking about our church, I'm talking about the big "C" church, Christians in general—the sheep, what we have a tendency to do is that we want our shepherds to affirm our worldview and when they don't we get angry.

See, I've got to be really careful here because Peter says to do this willingly, not grudgingly. In other words he says, "Leadership is hard. You're going to take shots, you're going to take arrows, make sure that your heart stays soft and your skin gets thick. Don't have a thin skin where you get sensitive to everybody's criticism and you are trying to please people and then your heart gets bitter and hardened. Make sure you have a clear mind, thick skin, and a soft heart."

And then he says in verse 2 he says, "Do this, not because of what you think you're going to get out of it, don't look for notoriety or a bigger platform." Man, if you are leading so that way you can get affirmation and pats on the back you won't be leading very long because it is not for the faint of heart. You do it eagerly to serve God and to care for people.

So, really quickly, how are shepherds to care for the flock? I've got three quick things. Number one:

### **Feed with faithful Bible teaching.**

Paul gave these words to a young preacher by the name of Timothy in 2 Timothy 4. It's one of my favorite descriptions of preaching. Listen to what he says to this young pastor. He says:

"I give you this charge," in other words, charge is a challenge, "Preach the," not your opinions, not self-help, preach the "word, and be prepared in season and out of season."

He's not talking about summer and fall. He's talking about when they want to hear it and when they don't. And make sure that you are correcting and rebuking as well as encouraging with great patience, because it's going to take some time and careful instruction. Rightly divide the word of God:

"For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine." I think we're there. "Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers," influencers and podcasters, "to say what their itching ears want to hear."



Just affirm what I already want to believe. Verse 4:

"They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

Algorithms.

"But you keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist," meaning, always know that there is always one more who needs to know Jesus, "and discharge all of the duties of your ministry." (NIV)

We have a dog and a cat at home and I like them most of the time. We have a 90 pound silver lab named Winston. He's dumb but he is awesome. And we have a short-haired black cat by the name of Onyx. And I like them most of the time.

The times that they really get on my nerves, though, are when they are hungry. Because the cat starts going through my legs tripping me up, especially if it's early in the morning. He's black and I can't see him. My dog—he's a silver lab. He's so big. He's clumsy. He keeps banging up against my legs.

And you know what they are doing? They are steering me toward food. They are hungry. And they are not steering me toward their food, they are steering me toward people food and they know where the people food can be found. And one of the things I have to do... We all have to make sure that they are well fed so that they don't shepherd us around the house.

In this digital age in which we live there are so many talking heads and algorithms that can affirm and confirm what you want to hear. And so, oftentimes, we can generally hear, if we are not careful... If sheep don't know God's word, sheep can try to steer the shepherd away from God's Word. Hungry people are often irritable, restless, and weak. Well-fed people are contented, cooperative, and strong.

And often the restlessness that exists in churches exists because they haven't been feeding enough on God's Word. And that's the shepherd's responsibility. And God has charged me and will hold me accountable for how I rightly divide this Book. That's why we're going to continue to emphasize just plowing through books of the Bible.

I'm starting to get close enough now to where I'm starting to envision my retirement one day. And if there is one thing that I want said of our church is that they would say, "Well, he wasn't perfect, but he made sure that we were well fed."



And I've said to our elders a couple of times, "Guys, I'm running out of time. There are so many books of the Bible I want to preach." There are so many books of the Bible I want to re-preach because I remember the first time I did it I'm like, "Eh, let's take that offline." So, I want to feed your faith through Bible teaching. Here's the second thing:

### **Protect from false teaching and ideology.**

Paul told the elders in Ephesus in Acts, chapter 20, he says:

"So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders."

In other words, you're only a leader because the Holy Spirit appoints you.

"I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you." (NLT)

Here, what he's beckoning them to do he says, "I want you to stay alert and I want you to know God's truth so well that you can discern truth from a lie." And he says, "Watch out for false teachers here are wolves," and he also says, "Watch out for the people from among your own group who are wolves."

Do you know that the New Testament says, "Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing." It never says, "Beware of wolves in shepherds clothing." And I'm not saying that there are not false shepherds. But I am saying that he warns us more about wolves in sheep's clothing than the other. What does that mean? Wolves, potentially, in your group. Wolves from among the seats. Wolves who might sow thoughts of confusion and division and reverse discipleship.

I want you to be so astute to the Word of God that you can pick up on truth from a lie.

And then lastly:

### **Guide by example.**



That's what shepherds do. Good shepherds have a responsibility to guide their sheep, not drive them. Look at verse 3. He says:

"Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example." (NLT)

In other words, we've got to walk the talk. And a good leader leads by example, not by directive. If you're having to always tell people what to do then you are not leading them, you are pushing them. There is a difference.

One of my favorite definitions of leadership is introducing change at a rate people can tolerate. Change is necessary. Things cannot stay the same. Most of us don't like change because of the way that it is executed and what we think we are losing and having no clarity over what we are gaining. So, leadership is leading people at a rate that they can tolerate.

Sheep cannot be driven. When they are driven, they scatter. They follow the voice of the shepherd that they have confidence in.

The other thing that my predecessor told me is he said, "Aaron, trust takes years to build and can be lost in only a moment. You maintain that trust." He says in verse 4:

"And when the Great Shepherd," that's Jesus, it's capitalized, "appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor. (NLT)

So, we're not doing this for the approval of people, but for God. Shepherds should not be sheep pleasers but they are following after God and they are trusting that the sheep will follow their lead. The apostle Paul said it the best, "Follow me," not because he was worthy to be followed, he says, "You follow me as long as I am following Christ."

Don't ever follow me if I am not following Christ.

Then in verse 5 he says:

"In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another," how counterculture is all of this? And then he says, "for 'God opposes,'" not the wicked, not the sinner, God opposes "the proud but gives grace to the humble. So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.'" (NLT)



I love that because pride is, "Well, I'm not sure that other people are going to notice me so I'm going to lift myself up." Humility says, "No, I'll actually wait for God to lift me up in due time."

These verses are for both leaders and followers. And I think that there are two extreme reactions when it comes to leaders in our society today. One would be cynicism. There is a lot of cynicism toward leaders, a lot of distrust of leaders due to the poor behavior of a few leaders. And I'm not saying that is legitimate. I'm just saying that it's too far of a reaction one way.

The other reaction in another way would just be idealism, kind of naively putting your trust in leaders, never asking any questions, never holding them accountable, putting them on a pedestal to worship blindly with no thought. That's not good either.

It can't be cynicism. It can't be idealism. I think the biblical way is realism: following imperfect leaders for the sake of our perfect God. This is the recognition that the leader is called and gifted by following God's will. It doesn't mean unchecked. It doesn't mean that they are not held accountable. But it means that we trust, that we have a benevolent bias toward them as they are following after God.

Peter says, "Accept the authority," which means every leader has got to be a good follower. And a good follower doesn't resent not being the leader and doesn't sabotage the leader's direction. They have an eager, cooperative, humble spirit rather than one of dissension or division.

I just need you to know this. I do not make all of the decisions around here, In fact, you'd be startled to know how few of the decisions I make. Because it's not about me. It's not about my opinion. In fact, I'm trying to get the best people around me who love Jesus sacrificially. And I'm saying... In fact, one of my favorite questions to ask in a meeting is this: What do you think?

And oftentimes I'll let people make a decision if I don't think it's mission critical and it's not immoral and unethical and all of that kind of stuff, it's just a difference of opinion, I'll oftentimes let the team make a decision that I personally wouldn't go with it because I want them to own it.

And you know what? Most of the time they are right. Don't ever tell them I said that out loud. But they were right. They were right. And if they are not, you know what? They just leaned and they became a better leader because of it. It's not my way or the highway. This is God's church.



Can I also say this? It can be a bit intimidating to be a pastor of this church and humbling because I know how many A level leaders that we have in our church across all campuses. Men and women who are not just difference makers inside the church, but are difference makers, literally making a difference in our city and our communities in massive ways.

Guys, we have CEOs, superintendents of massive schools, entrepreneurs, coaches, business owners, professional athletes, influencers, real estate agents, baristas, teachers, stay at home moms, full-time students who are A level leaders. And, honestly, it is humbling for me.

And one of the reasons this church has been so blessed is that many of you who are strong leaders in your industry or in your home are willing to be supportive of the leadership and direction of our church. And I think God blesses us because of that. And I want to thank you and say that you are a joy to pastor. You are a joy to pastor. I love you so much.

So, now he's going to shift gears in verse 7. He's going to get more devotional. And he says this:

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." (NLT)

What a great verse. A great verse. I don't really like the translation of the word the NLT uses here give. I don't think that is accurate enough. It's not powerful enough. Other translations use the word, not give, but cast. I actually don't know that I like that any better because it reminds me of fishing. I don't know about you, but when I cast a line into the water, I just reel it right back in. And here he is saying...

Have you ever done this? You cast your worries and cares upon God, but then you just reel them back in. We are like control freaks, man, "I prayed about it." No. You took it right back. I don't like the word give and I don't like the word cast. The original Greek word I like much better. It's the word hurl. It says, "Hurl all of your worries and anxieties upon God."

Picture a big 60 pound sandbag on your shoulders weighing you down and you hurl it off of yourself onto God. And God says, "Finally. Thank you. I've got the shoulders to carry this. You don't. Just put all of these worries on me. Let me carry them."

The opposite of hurling them upon God would be to worry. And worry is a form of pride because it carries concerns upon oneself instead of having to trust that God can do it. Let me put it this way: Worry is prayer inverted. It's prayer that terminates upon yourself. Let me say it a little more clearly. It's you talking to yourself about your problems. And God says, "Redirect those to Me."



Every now and then I have somebody come to me and say, “Man, where do I get going in starting with my prayer life? I really want a vibrant prayer life. How do I get started? How do I do this? Is there a model? Is there a map?” And I would say, “Do you have a list of worries?” Most everybody does. I say, “Just take those and redirect them to Him. Stop talking to yourself about them. Redirect them to God.” Instant vibrant prayer life. You have no shortage of material. Continue to give it to God.

And anxious, fretting, worrying people—have you noticed this?—sap the energy from others when they should first take their burdens to the Lord and leave them there.

So every time I have a tendency to want to complain about my issues or worry about my issues, I just need to stop for a moment. And it’s not that I don’t ever need to confide in someone, it’s just that have I taken it to God first? Have I hurled it to God or am I hurling it on other people?

The Bible tells us about 12 spies in the Old Testament who returned from scoping out the Promised Land. This is the land that God wanted them to enter into. And they came back and instead of hurling their worries upon God, they hurled their worries upon the people.

And they said, “It’s a beautiful and fertile land, but it’s too well fortified and their soldiers are giants and we’re like grasshoppers in their sight. And we will never be able to beat them.” And rather than hurling their worries upon the Lord and trusting that He would provide, they hurled their worries upon the people.

You know what? Worry is a lot like courage. Both are contagious. People will catch your worries. They will also catch your courage.

And the people rose up against Moses’ leadership and they insisted on turning back when God was ready to lead into the Promised Land. And they wandered in the desert for years because some important followers couldn’t hurl their worries upon the Lord.

Can I just ask you this? What are you doing with your worries? Hurl them upon the Lord.

Verse 8—this may be my favorite verse in the whole book:

“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.” (NLT)

He says, “Stay alert, exclamation point.”





Have you ever been on a late night drive somewhere and you are getting drowsy? And all of a sudden you come to and you realize, "I don't remember the last five minutes of that drive." Isn't that scary? You've begun to get lulled to sleep. What's scarier than being lulled to sleep physically when you are behind the wheel is being lulled to sleep spiritually when a matter of life and death is on the line.

And Peter says, "Stay alert! Stay sober-minded." Wake up. Because you have an enemy that is not passive. He's actively coming against you and he wants to destroy the work that God is doing in you and destroy the work that God is doing in and through our church. He has come to kill, and steal, and destroy.

And the analogy that Peter uses to describe Satan, our enemy, is a lion. And lions only have two modes. Have you ever seen those nature shows? Stealth—when they are hunting for prey. Roar—when they think they have it. Stealth and roar. And right now Satan is either in stealth mode in your life or he is in roar mode because he thinks he has you.

The question is: Are you alert and are you aware of it?

I did some research this last week and learned that the odds of being attacked by a shark is one in 4.3 million. Not very high odds. But every time I go to the water I hear the Jaws theme music in the back of my mind. And my family is like, "Dad, it's Lake Michigan. Chill out." Alright? But I don't know, man. Those sharks can swim up channels. You just never know. But the odds of being attacked by a shark—not likely going to happen.

The odds of being attacked by a grizzly bear 1.2 billion. Not high odds. But every time I go hiking down the Monon Trail, I'm ready. I'm ready. Once again, you never know.

The odds of being attacked by an actual lion, one in several million. Get this. If you don't live or work in rural Africa, the odds of being attacked by a lion literally zero.

Your chances of being attacked by a supernatural lion, one out of one—100 percent, man. And so often we're living unaware of it. Peter said, "Stay alert. Wake up. He's got your number. He's either roaring or he's in stealth mode, but he's there."



And don't think that you can contend with him alone. He's been doing this way longer than you. And he is actively at work to kill, and steal, and to destroy, which means that we need to be just as active and at work to grow in the knowledge of the truth and to starve sin and temptation.

I think much of this letter that Peter writes is confessional. He's writing from experience because every time he encourages us away from something, he's going, "Yep, I've been there and I've failed."

And when Peter says, "Stay alert," you want to know what I think was coming across his mind was? The Last Supper. The night before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Because Peter got lulled to sleep and Jesus flat out told him what he was going to do. And Peter, in his pride, let his guard down, got overconfident. And he failed Jesus. And I think he is urging us to stay alert to the thing that he failed to do.

And then he says:

"Stand firm,"

That's where we got the title of this message series:

"against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are." (NLT)

Suffering and persecution are not anything new. And, in fact, there are more Christians who are suffering, persecuted, and put to death for their faith, perhaps now, more than in any other time in history. It's just that the media doesn't cover it. Brothers and sisters all over the world, primarily in places like Africa and the East are being put to death for their faith.

And he says, "Listen. Suffering and persecution for the Christian is not the exception; it is the norm." It's just that we have been living in a bubble for a long time. And right now you may feel pretty overwhelmed, but Peter says, "Stand firm. Grow strong. Stand firm. Grow strong."

Why? Not because you are stronger than our enemy, but because Jesus is stronger than our enemy and He has defeated him on our behalf. Jesus' final words on the cross were not, "It is ongoing." The words on the cross were, "It is finished."

Things may look pretty dark right now but you want to know how all of this ends? Just go to Revelation, chapter 20, verse 9 and it tells us how this is going to end. It is the final battle. The final octagon fight between Satan and Jesus. And, spoiler alert, it's not a big fight. To be honest, it's a little anti-climactic.



Any of you ever done one of those pay per view boxing or MMA fights and it's like this big build up and the fight is over in three seconds. Like, "I just wasted my money."

It's like that. It takes about a second. And not a single punch is thrown. Jesus speaks and it's over. Therefore, I can bring that kind of confidence in my fight. The point is this. You do not need to fear Satan, but you also should not ignore him. You have to fight him, but not with the weapons of the flesh. Not with your personality. Not with your wisdom. Not with your resolve. Not with your insight. It's like bringing a knife to a gun fight. This is being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

And then we finish up this passage together:

"In his kindness," not in His abrasive harshness, but in His kindness, "God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while," once again, not if but when, "he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation." That's a promise friends. It's a promise, "All power to him forever! Amen." (NLT)

What this means in your life, no matter how badly you've messed things up, no matter how badly you are suffering, no matter how badly you are struggling in God's kindness He is beckoning you back to Him.

And I'm just wondering if anybody needs to respond to that today. One of the things in my 25 years of fulltime ministry, that just never ever, ever, ever gets old is how God can radically change somebody's life in dramatic ways and He continues to be on the move to do that.

And every time I step up on this platform, my prayer as I walk out here is, "God, one more. That one more would step out of darkness and into the light, who would step out of destruction and into the promises that you died for them to have. And there isn't anybody who is beyond God's kindness and grace and mercy.

If you come to the end of yourself, it's a pretty good place to be because that's where the Holy Spirit empowers you to see things that you could never see and to change in ways that you could never change on your own.

This last week I was with our team in Louisville, Kentucky at a conference for ministry leaders and what many of you may not know, some of you know this, but before I came to Traders Point I served briefly on staff of a church in Louisville, Kentucky. I wasn't the lead pastor; I was just on staff.



And we're in Louisville and I'm standing in the lobby of the church of this conference and this guy walks up to me, gets this big smile on his face and he says, "Aaron Brockett," he's like, "You don't know me, but I know you." And I thought, "Oh, no. I don't know how this is going to go."

And he said, "Hey, I've never gotten the chance to tell you this." But he said, "I don't know, 19 or 20 years ago I was a mess. I was not a Christian. My marriage was hanging on by a thread. I was up to my eyeballs in addiction issues. And my wife and I drove past this church. And she said, 'We don't have any other options. We are going there this Sunday.' And I didn't want to but we went."

And he said, "We walked in. Quite honestly, Aaron, I was hung over and didn't want to be there. And you walked up to me that morning." I had no knowledge of this. I don't remember any of it. "You walked up to me and you said, 'Hey, I think you are new here, I haven't seen you before, my name is Aaron.'"

And he said, "I was shocked because it was in a room of about 1,000 people. How in the world you knew I was new I don't know." And then he said, "Then I was shocked that you got up on stage and preached that day. And I need you to know, I received Jesus that day. My life radically changed. My marriage got stable. Today I'm a campus pastor at a church."

Guys, can I just tell you, I do not tell you that for self-promotion purposes. I tell you that for two reasons. One: it reminded me that one of the things that I so look forward to in heaven is conversations like that. Somebody will come running up to me, "Hey, you don't know this but God used you to change my life."

Can I just say this? I want you to live your life that way. Who is going to run up to you in heaven to say, "You don't know this but because of your boldness, because of your love, I gave my life to Jesus."?

The second reason I tell you that story is because there isn't anybody who is too far gone.

And I'm wondering if there is somebody here today who is hung over, maybe literally. I wonder if there is somebody who walked in here and you are steeped in shame and you don't think you are worth saving. I'm wondering if there is somebody in here who is hurting and bleeding out, spiritually speaking, emotionally speaking, and you need the hand of the Healer, the hand of the kindness of God to bring you back into relationship with him.



Guys, we have been talking about awakening and revival for 18 months. I want to be super clear. Revival is not warm, fuzzy, stirring worship. Revival is not hype and emotionalism. Revival is brought on when God's people repent and confess sin. And that doesn't happen once, that happens daily. That may not just happen daily, that may happen hourly. Because here's all what repentance is, it's a correction to the wheel. You are just constantly making corrections, "God, is there anything in me?"

So, here's what I want to do right now. I just want to get really bold. And for those of you who need to receive Jesus today, let me lead you in that prayer. So, if you would, across all of our locations, bow your heads and close your eyes. And if you are ready to receive Jesus, let me shepherd you through this prayer.

Father God, I come to You right now and I'm a mess. I'm inconsistent. I'm broken. I'm a sinner. I'm defensive, steeped in shame. And I need You. God, I don't know everything yet, I don't have all of the answers to my questions yet. But I know one thing, You are God and Jesus is Your Son. And I believe that the Holy Spirit can come into me today.

And so, by grace through faith, I ask You to do so. Would You please come into my life and sit upon the throne of my heart? God, I confess my sins to You and I turn from them. I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and I receive Him as my Lord and Savior. And for the rest of my days, as good as I possibly can, I'm going to follow You, imperfectly. But when I fall I'll confess and repent and get right back up and keep chasing You down.

So, Father, would You please save me, redeem me, restore me, radically change me so that I might live out the rest of my days on earth for You and for You alone?

Now, right now, with heads bowed and eyes closed... The Bible says if you publicly confess Jesus before men, then I will confess your name before God the Father. So, Boldy, right now, if you prayed that prayer would you just publicly acknowledge that by raising up your hand? Right now. All across the room. Just raise up your hand.

This is a big thing. Every single service we've had so many hands go up, people professing and confessing the name of Jesus Christ. Can we put our hands together and celebrate life change? Brothers and sisters coming into the Kingdom of God. May we never be cynical about that.



Right now if you raised your hand can I just say this? Welcome to the family of God. We want to love you and encourage you and equip you in that journey. Would you tell somebody that you made that decision so that we can help you with your next steps?

What a joy it has been to walk through the book of 1 Peter with you as we stand firm. So, let's quite literally do that now. Let's stand firm on our feet across all of our locations as we lift up our voices to King Jesus alone. And everybody said: Amen and Amen.

