

## **2018 Lenten Message Series: "I Give Up"**

Series Lens: It is traditional to give something up for Lent. Typically, it's a food item, a comfort item or some form of entertainment. While this is a temporary fast (to be picked up again after Lent), we explore the things in our life that ought to be given up for good.

Series verse: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

Sunday, March 4: Holy Communion

Title: "I Give Up...Anxiety"

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Text: 1 Peter 5:7 "Throw all your anxiety onto Him every day, because you know how He cares about you."

Theme: Following Jesus means loosening our attachment to this world, and thus frees us from anxiety.

Memory Verse: "Throw all your anxiety onto Him every day, because you know how He cares about you." -1 Peter 5:7

Skit: "You Never Know What Could Happen" Worry about vacation keeps Mikayla from going!

Activity: Introduce *White Flag* song in opening set and reference the white flag on the wall.

Blurb: Anxiety is near epidemic across our country. Shootings and violence, cancer and dementia, fear of loss of wealth and meaningful relationships, keep us focused on worry. We realize how powerless we are against such ugly enemies. The Bible teaches us that anxiety stems from an unhealthy attachment to this world. This Sunday we discover how following Jesus means giving up our anxiety. Come, if you dare!

### ***WORSHIP OUTLINE:***

**Opening Song:** *The Same Love* -Sanctify

**Welcome:** -Pastor David

**PP:** Memory Verse:

"Throw all your anxiety onto Him every day, because you know how He cares about you."  
-1 Peter 5:7

**Worship Music Set:** - Sanctify

*White Flag*

*Your Love Defends Me*

*Be Still My Soul* (with stress balls for kids)

**Skit:** "A Relaxing Getaway" (Makayla - so worried about what could go wrong, she doesn't go!)

## Bumper Video

### Message Part #1: "I Give Up...Anxiety"

#### PP#1: I Give Up ...

Anxiety

"Throw all your anxiety onto Him every day, because you know how He cares about you."

-1 Peter 5:7

I Give Up ... Anxiety! 1 Peter 5:7 "Throw all your anxiety onto Him every day, because you know how He cares about you."

#### PP#2: *Image of Nikolas Cruz so often seen in media since shooting.*

Anxiety is near-epidemic. The extreme violence in our country and world has left us all insecure and frightened. Is it safe to go to a concert? Is it safe to send my kids to school? With racial prejudice and the ensuing violence, is it safe to stop at a gas station? Can I trust the police to be fair? Can the police pull someone over without fearing for their lives? The safest places have become scenes of horror: schools, churches, campuses. We dare not leave the house! And then, Duane tells me now that our house has elevated levels of radon.

Any person, it seems, could turn violent, not just psychopaths, or terrorists. News reporters have those unnerving interviews with neighbors and friends, who say, "He was a normal guy, I thought I knew him pretty well. I never dreamed he was capable of something like this." You just can't predict—and protect against—this kind of violence.

#### PP#3: *Image of a person looking worried next to a stranger, or feeling unsafe on a street? w/others.*

As a society we are losing our feelings of safety, we are trusting each other less, we're getting nervous easily around people walking near us, and we fret for our loved ones.

This is a work of evil! God created us for life, and joy, and blessing, and the reality of human ugliness takes away our joy, robs our security and blessing!

#### PP#4: *Image for a person grieving or wounded or scared, who turns his/her back on God.*

And perhaps most destructive of all, is that anxiety can turn us away from God. When we see God letting all this happen, to such innocent, tender, people...even our kids!...we get mad and tell ourselves that God is not worth it. Our anger pushes us away from God, who really is our only hope. And then we are left with that most miserable of plights, left with only human abilities to try to deal with—and cope with—the swirling chaos. We are hopeless, because human endeavors are rife with evil, and humanity is capable of such heinous violence.

Anxiety robs our joy and blessing in the rest of our lives, too. We worry about finances, jobs, education, health, cancer, dementia, economics, our kids facing roadblocks, not thriving, missed opportunities, fading dreams, death. It's crippling. We fail to live abundantly.

**PP#5:** Isaiah 41:10 “Do not fear [declares the Lord], for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?”

Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

But into this anxiety, God speaks, “Do not fear [declares the Lord], for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” [Isaiah 41:10] “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?” [Psalm 27:1] “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” [Psalm 23:4]

**PP#6:** John 14:27 Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

God offers the only real answer to the fears we face. Jesus, who is Himself the Prince of Peace, at whose birth the angels proclaimed “peace on earth, and good will to people,” this Jesus promises, “Peace I leave with you; *My peace* I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. [John 14:27]

The world is scary. Life is uncertain. Days are filled with violence. Because of that, we need Jesus. You need to cling to Jesus, and more importantly, let Jesus cling onto you!

**PP#7:** Give Up ... Anxiety

Anxiety can be a barrier to the plan that God has for our lives. Danger and risk can make us shy away from the boldness we need to embrace the future God has planned. Mikayla finally decided she dare not go on her trip. There were too many things that could go wrong. And so she missed out.

Fear can also keep us from embracing what God has planned for us, even in the little ways. Fear of scarcity keeps us from tithing, and missing out on God’s financial blessings. Fear of rejection, and being considered weird, keeps us from talking about Jesus, and missing out on the way others can experience release and transformation in their lives. Fear of failure can keep us where we are, and not stretching into new possibilities, and causing us to miss out on new blessings, new possibilities, a different reality.

Satan can use fear to keep us from God, and to keep us from growing in God.

We need to give up our anxiety. We need to let go of it when it holds us back. It’s a trust factor. We trust in God, so then we can go forward. We rely on God as we take the next step. The opposite of fear, is not doubt, I don’t think, but fear!

In the sermon that Jesus gave on the Mount, the one that describes a very different way of life, that describes life in God’s Kingdom, one of Jesus’ main points was addressing anxiety.

**PP#8:** Matthew 6:25-34 (CEB)

25 “Therefore, I say to you, don’t worry about your life, what you’ll eat or what you’ll drink, or about your body, what you’ll wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than

clothes? 26 Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are? 27 Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? 28 And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. 29 But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these.

Matthew 6, beginning in verse 25, "Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are? Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these."

Don't fret the small stuff. Who cares about what other people think. You're fine. You're beautiful as you are. Not worrying is a direct corollary to trusting in our Heavenly Father. And really, worry doesn't change things.

Verse 30,

**PP#9: Matthew 6:25-34 (CEB)**

30 If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, won't God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? 31 Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' 32 Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

"If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, won't God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? [Trusting in God is the antidote to fear.] Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' Gentiles [people without faith in God] long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [Prioritize your focus.] Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

There is a freedom here that Jesus is trying to teach us. He doesn't mean don't plan. He's not saying don't use common sense to provide for yourself. He's saying don't make this daily fretting the focus of your day. Be focused on God, His Kingdom and His plan for your life. The rest will work out. And, I have found, the less we worry about those worldly things, the less important they become, and then the less I care about them or need them. They are rightly ordered in my life.

I want to show you a video of a dog and four balls. We can be a bit too much like this dog, who so badly wanted all of the balls, and just couldn't leave even one behind. Have a look!

**Video:** <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=NywZLP1hnXU> (70 seconds)

We want to keep all the balls, and we work so hard to hold them all. We worry and fret about losing one. Did you hear the dog whining? That's like our anxiety as we focus on having the balls.

**PP#10: Give Up ... Anxiety**

1. God calls us to be risk takers

Instead, we need to seek God's Kingdom first. We need to boldly go where God is calling. And God calls us to a radical life. He calls us to trust *His* reasoning, not ours. Don't spend all your disposable income on clothes. Give money away! Tithe! And when you do, your finances will be ordered. Don't put yourself first. The last shall be first. Love your enemy. God pushes us out into the danger zone. God doesn't want you to say safe at home. He wants you to risk, and go. We need to embrace the possibilities. Not that we should be stupidly foolish, throwing all caution to the wind, but we need to be stupidly foolish, throwing caution to the wind! Approach that person. Speak of Jesus. Love the unlovable. Be the one who takes the stand. Give blindly, without any hope of reward. Live life...radically!

**PP#11: Give Up ... Anxiety**

1. God calls us to be risk takers
2. Name the fear [of loss] behind the anxiety

But to do that, as Jesus-followers, we need to unmask anxiety. We need to expose the fear behind the anxiety. As I have lived, and as I've counseled people, I have come to realize that behind anxiety is the fear of loss. Sit with your anxieties for a moment. Probe deeper. What is behind them? Keep digging. You will find, down deep, there is a loss you want to avoid.

Spending too much money on clothes: fear of not having enough: fear of not looking better. Behind that, here is the danger of losing value, identity, loss of status, loss of control. Worry about health. Danger of loss of mobility. Loss of activities you can do. Loss of independence. Loss of meaning. Loss of value. Loss of identity. Loss of life itself.

**PP#12: On a piece of Paper, heading and 3 columns to fill in:**

**Give Up ... Anxiety**

<u>Anxiety</u>	<u>Deeper Loss</u>	<u>Given Up to God</u>
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Use this time of Lent, perhaps your daily devotions for this week, to inventory your anxieties. Create a list of what you worry about, what is robbing you of your peace. Then, next to them, list the deeper loss behind them that you fear.

**PP#13: "Throw all your anxiety onto Him every day, because you know how He cares about you."  
-1 Peter 5:7**

The Christian antidote for letting these fears run our lives, is giving them over to God. You know this. Take them to God. Pray about them. Let God handle them. Keep doing your part, for sure. But release them. I love our text verse here from 1 Peter 5:7. I love how it is *daily*! For our human reality is that we may give it to God one day, but the next day, other fears and anxieties crowd in.

Or, we take back the worry, and nurse it again. It is a *daily* giving to God. Why can we give them to God? Because we trust God. We remember His care for us. And we rely on that. Not that we expect God to protect us from all hardship or trouble. But we can be at peace knowing that whatever it is, it will work out. We may need support, but we will claim victory over it, if we persevere.

**PP#14:** Give Up ... Anxiety

1. God calls us to be risk takers
2. Name the fear [of loss] behind the anxiety
3. Give Up voluntarily what you are afraid of losing

One more step. How do we give our fears to God? We document our anxieties. We uncover the fear of loss behind them. And then, here is the Gospel...here is the Christian path...ready? It's choosing to voluntarily give up what we are afraid of losing.

Our normal way of operating is to grip all the balls that we don't want to lose. Then, fear sets in of losing it. So we focus on preserving it, and we worry about what could take that away. Anxiety dominates our days as we hang on so strongly and defensively.

But Jesus demonstrates the path to peace. It is willingly choosing to surrender, first. He calls us to deny ourselves. He shows us by going to the cross, willingly. He calls us to follow Him.

What if you truly gave your money to God? What if you willingly surrendered it—all of it!—to Him? You no longer “own” it, and have to keep it safe for yourself. If it comes, great. Steward it well. If it goes, so be it. What freedom and peace when you voluntarily go to God and say, “I give up, to you, O God, my financial resources. I will not cling to them as mine.” Anxiety drains away!

What if you gave up your career? You could be totally at peace doing a lot of things!

What if you voluntarily gave up your safety? God, I give you my life. If today I live, I will live for you. If today I die, I die in you. If I become paralyzed, if I get cancer, if I lose my health, it's yours anyway. There is no bad outcome for me today. I choose to willingly give up my need to be mobile, and healthy, and comfortable, and successful. I may want it. I may like it. But I will surrender it. I will do whatever I can, no matter my state or condition. It will be good, because I give it to you to begin with.” Life doesn't have to be a certain way to be good. All you need is God for life to be good.

I have a friend in prison, who has no freedoms, but has never been so happy or alive. He is living for Jesus in his cell. He is making a difference in other prisoner's lives. He told me it doesn't matter where he lives. He is living abundantly.

What if you voluntarily gave up the safety and future of your kids? I've thought a lot about this since the recent school shootings. I am in danger of trying to keep my kids so safe that they won't be able to live fully, and thrive, and risk, and be bold. I am working—not there yet!—working on voluntarily giving up my kids' safety and futures. Whatever happens, they will be with Jesus for eternity. I need to release them so that God can make whatever calling—no matter how crazy, or radical, or unsafe that may be—on their lives, for His Kingdom. And if God calls them to dangerous settings, where they could be harmed and abused, in order to further His Kingdom, then I want to be able to release them into that calling!

**PP#15:** *Image for clinging too tightly to this world, things of this world.*

Our anxiety is based on a too firm hold on this life. But we are not made for this life. We are here only for a time, and we are here on a mission. We often turn this life into our destination, and

because of that, we are wracked by anxiety. That fear is broken only when we voluntarily give up to God what we are afraid of losing, so that the fear of losing it no longer has power over us.

I visited with Bob Bullard this past week. I talked to him about how his kidneys have failed, how dialysis didn't work, how there is no longer any treatments available. I said to him, "So, you know you're going to die soon, don't you." He said, "Yes." I asked him, "How do you feel about that?" And, in true Bob Bullard, practical and matter-of-fact fashion, he just shrugged his shoulder and turned his hand up, like, "It is what it is." I then asked him, "Are you ready to die?" He answered me, and I quote, "Oh yes. I've lived a good life."

Bob surrendered his life to God long ago. It really didn't derail him to have his terrible stroke. Miserable, yes. But not derailed. And now he does not have fear in facing death.

I'll tell you, I want to be like that! I want that kind of peace. I want that joy.

And it comes when I willingly give up to God what I am afraid of losing.

**PP#16:** *On a piece of paper, heading and 3 columns to fill in:*

**Give Up ... Anxiety**

Anxiety

Deeper Loss

Given Up to God

What are your anxieties? What are the fears of loss behind them? And can you give it up to God?

In a moment we're going to have Holy Communion. And in our prayer time to get ready, I want you to ask the Holy Spirit to point out an anxiety that you carry around. Then ask Him to show you what it is you are afraid of losing, that lies behind that anxiety. Then I want you, if you are ready, to willingly give it up to God. Then, you will experience the peace of Christ.

Pray with your hands on your lap, facing up. That can help you give up, let go to God. And it also makes you able to receive the peace that only Jesus can bring.

Let's pray.

### **Holy Communion & Offering**

Words of Institution: Rev. Dan Hair

Prayer of Holy Spirit

Serving of the Elements

Bringing up the offering

CROSS Prayer

**Closing Song:** *Those Who Trust* - Sanctify

**PP:** Memory Verse

"Throw all your anxiety onto Him every day, because you know how He cares about you."

-1 Peter 5:7

**Announcements:**

**Benediction:** -Pastor David