
September 2019

Backpack of Burdens

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Recommended Citation

Schaurer, Savanna (2019) "Backpack of Burdens," *The Idea of an Essay*. Vol. 6 , Article 7.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/idea_of_an_essay/vol6/iss1/7

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Savanna Schaurer

I am a nursing student here and I am from the small town Covington, OH. I grew up on a small farm and enjoy being outside and playing volleyball or running. I also love to bake and paint when I am not studying for nursing school. I hope to become a pediatric or NICU nurse and travel for both personal trips and missions when I graduate in a couple years.

Backpack of Burdens

The sound of a heavy backpack hitting the hardwood floor echoed through the empty house, startling me out of my daze. Home again. I transferred my scattered textbooks and papers from the floor to the kitchen counter, stacking them neatly. I rubbed my shoulders that ached from carting my backpack around, and settled into my familiar seat at the counter. Opening my obsessively-organized planner to read “May 16th, 2017” reminded me that I would very soon be accepting my high school diploma on stage and starting a new life chapter. The thought terrified me to a degree: I resented being out of control of my life, and I wasn’t sure what God had in store for me after graduation. I shook my head to clear my mind and focus on my to-do list. A scribbled draft of my valedictorian speech taunted me as I tried to organize how to deliver my thoughts effectively. Our graduating class of seventy was tightly knit, and I wanted to address them with the right words before we went separate ways into the world. My train of thought was derailed when my phone lit up beside me to display a text from my friend Allison: “Have you heard about Jaret?” The countenance

of our quirky, red-headed, history-nut classmate flashed through my mind. I didn't think long about her question, so I simply responded no, and picked up my pencil to rearrange my thesis once again. Shortly after, my phone lit up a second time, now with an incoming call. I answered quickly, and Allison's unusual silence on the other end made my heart instantly sink. When she was finally able, she spoke in a small shaky voice.

“Hey...so Jaret was in an accident after he left school today...he, um, didn't make it Sav. He's dead.”

I took a moment to process her statement in stunned silence before I fully understood the severity of the situation. A bone-chilling sensation flooded my body while my stomach knotted itself into a tight bow. My first round of questions was directed at Allison: How did she get this information? Were the police *sure* it was Jaret's car? How can he be totally gone when I had just seen him earlier? After hanging up the phone, my chills rapidly turned to intense heat as anger filled my body. Then, my second round of questions was directed at God: How could he let this happen just days before graduation? What possible reason was there for taking away a single mother's only child? If Jaret had to die, why did the accident have to be so violent? Asking these questions didn't receive answers, and I felt my control over my life slipping away. In its place sat an ominous boulder of uncertainty; a boulder that caused my stable, organized, and carefully planned-out world to shatter. My shoulders still ached severely; not from my heavy backpack of textbooks, but from anxiety regarding Jaret's death. I needed answers from God so that I would be able to take care of the situation myself and regain the control in my life.

While I desperately tried to sort through this tragedy over the next few days, a bible verse kept returning to my mind: “Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (ESV, 1 Peter 5:7). I pushed this overused verse to the back of my mind, thinking that I needed deeper and more powerful scripture to deal with this situation. However, some of the simplest verses can have powerful and influential applications. This verse still persisted, and once I gave it consideration, I found a new meaning that I could apply to my out-of-control life. I had come across a very similar verse in Psalms 55:22 that says to “cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” With both verses in mind, a new aspect stood out to me that I had not acknowledged before: the use of the word ‘cast’. This verb choice was crucial to the application of these verses in my life. A quick google search revealed that “to cast” means to “throw something forcefully in a specified direction”. Using this definition in context of the verses, I realized that the verses do not suggest to *slide* your burden to God, or to *hand* your burden to God, or even to *lay* your burden before God. Both verses specifically used the word *cast*. Applying this new perspective to my life required me not just to quietly give my burden to God, but to completely let go of the little control I had, *throw* it all forcefully at His feet, and trust in the fact that He was ultimately in control. I had to let go of my obsessive planning and draw closer to God so that I could throw the burden of Jaret’s death on Him. After praying to God to take the weight of this tragedy from me, I could almost feel the anxiety vanish. It felt as if a lead jacket had been taken off my shoulders, and I could breathe and think and walk without anxiety pressing

on me. I was at peace now, and I was ready to approach my classmates and others around me to demonstrate love during a devastating time. My numerous questions were still unresolved, but I now had a surreal peace knowing that I did not need answers with an all-powerful God in control. By casting my burden completely on God, I gained peace in knowing I did not have to control such a burdensome trial on my own.

The shock of losing a friend never completely leaves. I often think about Jaret and his mother and friends with a heavy heart. Losing someone seems to have no justification or answer. It is easy to question God during these circumstances. When situations like these arise, I try to control the situation, thinking that I can handle it on my own without any assistance. I am quick to blame God, but reluctant to sacrifice control. When I cast my anxieties to the Lord, I can have peace in knowing the situation is in His hands and that He will always carry my heavy backpack, stuffed full of burdens, for me.

Works Cited

The Bible. English Standard Version: Containing the Old and New Testaments, Crossway, 2001.