

S'Mores, Anyone?



By Lori Payton

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

Surrounded by daylilies, we stood around the small fire pit in my backyard: four women, in four seasons of life, holding four pieces of paper — each tightly folded, unshared, private, heavy. *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you* (1 Peter 5:7). Does He really? Does He really care that my son is a prodigal? That we don't have enough money for our daughter's college bill? That my mother is in the hospital? That the kids at school make fun of my faith?

We sat quietly, praying and considering these worries, cares, concerns. Not just the generic, vague ones ... no. The nagging ones that kept us awake at night. The ones that crept back in after we thought we had "given them to God." The ones that caused a little panic-heart-skip each time they raised their ugly heads.

We held hands and prayed, "Father, we give these cares to You, as Your Word requested we do. Strengthen our faith. Help us to trust that nothing takes You by surprise, that You are in control. Forgive our unbelief and fill us with Your grace. Amen." The folded papers floated down into the coals, flamed briefly, and then were gone.

Is my son still wandering far? Yes. Is that tuition bill still a burden? Yes. Is my mother still in pain? Yes. Am I still misunderstood because of my faith? Yes.

But when I am tempted to worry about these things and become anxious, I remember that Jesus has already carried those concerns to the Cross. I release them to Him and trust Him to take care of them because He cares for me. I am reminded that when life sends me hard things, I can sit and stew with worry, or I can cast them into the all-consuming fire of God's love and grace ... and then go roast some marshmallows, perhaps.

S'mores, anyone?

Dear Lord, help me to continually release my anxieties, my worries, my cares, casting them into Your all-consuming fire of love and grace, trusting You to take care of them. I hold on to the hope I have in Christ Jesus, my Savior. In His name. Amen.

Lori Payton, originally from Southern California, is a teacher, mother of four, and wife of Rev. Leonard Payton, pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Forest Park, Illinois. Enjoying her fourteenth kitchen in thirty-two years, she considers herself an annual in God's garden: a zinnia, to be exact.