



## LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

### *Finding Rest for the Weary in Jesus*

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

*Matthew 11:28-30*

Do you feel like you’re carrying a lot on your shoulders? Are you burdened down by the daily responsibilities and hardships of life? Jesus promises to carry our burdens, but what does that mean? In this 5-part Bible study, we’ll explore what it means to give our burdens over to Jesus and find rest in Him.

## Calling All the Weary

When we set out on a journey, we all pack some sort of a bag. Whether it is a backpack, a gym bag or a nice four wheeled suitcase, our common tendency is to overpack. We jam way too many articles of clothing, personal items and “what if I need these” things in our bag. We are worrying about the unexpected and want to be prepared.

But usually, that overstuffed bag becomes a real hindrance. It weighs too much. It becomes a real burden as we haul it on and off airplanes, trains, buses or cars. Soon, the traveling itself becomes a pain (literally and figuratively).

Let’s take a moment and think about that over-packed bag and the insecurities that nudged us into that packing routine. I think many of us live our spiritual lives in a similar fashion. We “over pack” our hearts and minds with a wide array of anxieties and worries.

We start each day or each week with a calendar filled with obligations and an overextended list of things to do. Some of those expectations are imposed on us by our employers, or our family or even our church, but many of those “requirements” are self-imposed.

We spend way too much time anticipating what “might happen” and so we burden our lives with a long list of things to worry about. Soon, even the hardest among us becomes WEARY. That is an older term that isn’t used a lot in modern society, but it is an excellent depiction of being overwhelmed.

Jesus had that term clearly in mind when he addressed the Galilean crowd in Matthew chapter 11. He had been speaking to John the Baptist’s disciples and then turned His attention to the group that had gathered. Using the unrepentant cities of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum as examples, He urged them to repent of their own sins.

And then He acknowledged that they were “overpacked.” He recognized that they were living overburdened lives. He knew the weight of their fears and the pain associated with their anxious hearts. He knew they were struggling with choices and those struggles were draining them of energy and strength.

Please note that He did not berate them for their lack of faith. He didn't chastise them for their emotional weakness. Instead, He acknowledged that they were needy and WEARY. He recognized that they were personally, emotionally and spiritually WEARY.

And, He extended a personal word of encouragement as He said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matt. 29:11).

As the Lord looks on our lives today, He is making the same assessment. He recognizes that we are WEARY and in need of real rest. He offers to come alongside and "lighten our loads." He offers us rest.

### **Discuss/Reflect**

- In what ways are you "burdened?" What is weighing you down?
- Take a look at that list of ways you feel burdened right now. Can you see any similarities within the issues? Do they have a common root like fear? Review each item through the "lens" of II Timothy 1:7 and Deuteronomy 31:8. Any new thoughts about that list?
- When you are "weary," how does it manifest itself in your life? Who does it affect?

### **Act**

- Set up a meeting with a friend and agree to share some of the items in both your "over packed bags." Can your friend help you with anything? Can you assist them? Agree to pray specifically for each other this week.
- Find a quiet moment in a quiet place. Imagine for a moment what it must have felt like for those folks in Matthew 11 as Jesus acknowledged their pain. Now spend some time remembering that His same words of encouragement apply to you.

### **Go Deeper**

- [What Does It Mean for God to Bear Our Burden?](#)

## Come to Me

As Jesus addressed “all who are weary and burdened,” He gave them a very clear anecdote for their struggles. But before we think about what He did say, it might be instructive to think about what He did not say.

He did not encourage them to choose a religion. He didn’t say that they should go to church. He did not suggest that they should join a club or identify with others who have the same worldview. He did not give them a political ideal or a society fix in the form of policies or procedures.

He directed them to a person. He directed them to come to HIMSELF.

Jesus knew that He was the only one who could come alongside us and help us carry our burdens. We don’t need an organizational plan to relieve our stress. Our “overpacked” bags need a servant who can grab the bag and handle the weight. We need a person (a person who understands the difficulties of life) to come alongside us and help lighten the load.

So, Jesus offered Himself as the solution to our problem.

But all too often, we forget that simple truth. We get caught up in the hustle and bustle of normal life. We get absorbed by our families or our jobs. We get overextended at church. We do lots of “good things” at the expense of doing the right things. We get caught up in the “stuff” of being a believer and ignore Him.

I think that is why Ira Progoff wrote his little book, *The Well and the Cathedral*. In that short story, Progoff said, “Long ago people discovered a well and they came year after year to the well to drink refreshing water.

“They felt healed, made whole by the water. And then someone said, ‘Let’s build a building over the well. So, they built a building. Years past and others said, ‘Let’s build a cathedral here.’ So, they built it. As the years went by, this institutional church got bigger and bigger.

“And the people forgot about the well-the wellspring underneath.”

It's the WELL that we all need, not all the scaffolding around it. It is Jesus that we all need. It is Jesus who calls the weary to come.

### **Reflect/Discuss**

- Why do you think we wait to bring our burdens to Jesus? Why is He often our last resort, not our first choice?
- When pressure builds in your life, where do you look for relief? What kinds of “pain relievers” have you tried? Did they work?

### **Act**

- Consider your current list of pressures and burdens. Write them down. Then take a look at the things that you have tried in the past to use as “relief agents.” Put the corresponding “reliever” next to each of the burdens. Now ask yourself “Why was that relief only temporary?”
- Make sure that you have a stockpile of recorded music (hymns, choruses, and spiritual songs) that direct your attention to Jesus. Use your commute time, or some of your entertainment time to listen, really listen and turn your eyes to our Savior.

### **Go Deeper**

- [The Jesus You Can Know](#)

## Rest for Your Soul

Scientists tell us that rest is good for our bodies. Specifically, our muscles need rest. When we exercise, we make some microscopic tears in our muscle tissue. Rest allows certain cells called “fibroblasts” to repair our muscles. No rest, no growth.

It is exactly the same for our spiritual and emotional lives. If there is not a specified time period for rest, we will remain weary. God understood our propensity to push at everything. So, He modeled, even in the act of creation, a certain kind of rhythm to life. It was His plan that we work, and then we rest.

Modern society has ignored that pattern at its own peril. In the endless, incessant pursuit of production and achievement, we have largely ignored the necessity of having rest in our lives.

We definitely ignore that principle when it comes to our burdens. We tend to resign ourselves to the reality of carrying the load ourselves. We get up every morning facing the same kind of challenges and we believe they are ours and ours alone to bear.

We desperately need the words of Jesus to penetrate our minds. “Come to me! I will give you rest!”

Jesus wasn’t offering His children a utopia where labor was not required. (Work is not a “dirty word.” There was meaningful work before the fall [see Gen. 2:15] and we will enjoy work in heaven.) But a bow constantly bent will eventually break. Rest and peace for our souls is needed.

Jesus offers Himself as both the source and the means of attaining that rest. When we pursue Him in close and meaningful friendship, He provides Himself as the strength for the journey. Our rest is found in our fellowship with Him.

If we take advantage of His offer and come regularly to be with Him, our burdens are lighter and our struggles seem to be less of an issue. Our proximity to the Son of God gives us a source of comfort, a sense of direction and a companion for the journey.

As we develop our personal relationship with Christ, there is a never ending well that springs up with a very sweet peace for our souls.

### **Reflect/Discuss**

- What does “rest” look like for you? Is it easy for you to take a break? Or do you feel guilty when you pause?
- What does Jesus mean when He offers us peace for our souls? Is He promising that all our struggles will permanently cease? (Consider John 16:33 and 2 Timothy 3:2)

### **Act**

- Set apart a time and place this week to simply rest. Sit and do nothing. If anxious thoughts enter your mind, visualize them as bags that you take off and lay down at the feet of Jesus.

### **Go Deeper**

- [Learn How to Rest in God](#)

## Take My Yoke

As Jesus promised to provide rest for His disciples, He used an interesting term. He told them to take on His YOKE. Usually in the scriptures, a yoke was a figurative bar or stick that spoke of some kind of bondage or affliction. It referred to being in submission to someone whom you needed to serve and obey.

But it also referred to a literal curved piece of wood that was made for oxen or donkeys. That wooden bar was custom fitted for a specific animal in order to prevent pain or discomfort as they worked. The yoke represented an owner's care for his team. He took great effort to make sure the animals in his charge could reasonably get the job done with as little irritation as possible.

In our passage of scripture, the yoke is referring to the burdens and challenges facing believers. When Jesus clarified that those yokes were meant to be "easy," He was not saying bearing the yoke would be a tranquil experience or something that would be stress free. Instead, He was stating that the experience is meant to be straight forward and that He was designing those circumstances specifically for us.

That yoke is meant to work for us, not against us. When we embrace our struggles as being "Father filtered," we can see them from a new perspective. They are custom made for us. They are meant to help us pursue our "real work" of glorifying God. They are part of our journey.

And interestingly, those ancient yokes were most often made for two animals. They were to be coupled together. The yoke hitched an older, more seasoned ox next to a younger one. Together, they got the job done.

When Jesus makes reference to a yoke in this passage, He is reminding His listeners of the relationship He wants to have with His people. He is the older and wiser part of the team and is there to help his struggling "partner." As we need help in life, Christ is right there ready to help carry the burden. With His constant help, the burdens are indeed "light."



### **Reflect/Discuss**

- Why do you think Jesus said, “take my yoke upon you”? In what ways can we see our current burdens and difficulties as part of God’s ultimate plan for our lives?
- Are some “yokes’ more challenging to deal with than others? What makes them more difficult?
- Solomon talked about being yoked with others in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. What are some specific advantages to being in partnership with someone else as we labor? How do those advantages apply to our relationship with Christ?

### **Act**

- What is something you see as a burden, but is something God wants you to do? Do that this week.

### **Go Deeper**

- [Take My Burden](#)

## Learn from Me

When someone wants to learn a trade, they seek out an apprenticeship program. They find someone who is very good at a particular skill and attach themselves to that seasoned tradesman.

Similarly, in the business world, if someone is desiring a career in finance, or accounting or marketing, they seek out a mentorship program. They are looking to learn their craft by watching others do it well.

Those mentors have a very specific role. They support and facilitate learning. They direct and teach by example. Those mentors are there to listen and act as a sounding board for problems and help direct new ideas.

And along the way, those tutors open themselves up as models for how to get the job done. They are personally committed to the success of their mentees.

And so it is with our relationship with Jesus. He is totally committed to our spiritual “success.” He is deeply invested in our spiritual growth and development. So much so that He directly instructs us in Matthew 11:29 to “learn from me.”

As we apprentice ourselves under the guidance of Christ, we start by acknowledging that we need Him as a personal coach. We acknowledge our past, our sins, our propensity to wander and ask for His help.

We make ourselves available to Him. We commit to preserving time, energy and interest in His teaching. We commit to do our very best. We offer no excuses. We take responsibility for our growth. We make it a priority. We welcome the constructive criticism and enthusiastically apply what we learn.

The Lord Jesus offers Himself as the ultimate teacher. He actively takes on the role of our spiritual tutor. As He invites us all to come to Him, He is offering to help carry our load and provide rest for our souls. Our job is to lean in and learn.

### **Reflect/Discuss**

- Everyone has a favorite teacher. Think about yours. Why were they so important in your life? Can you see similarities to the way God tutors us?
- How do you learn best? Are you a “hands on” learner? Do you absorb information best by hearing it? Reading it? Watching it? Seeing it modeled? Consider your best learning environment and make sure you are intentional about ingesting God’s Word in the most effective way possible.
- How do you track what you are learning about the Christian life? Do you journal? Share your victories and defeats with a small group? Express your adventures with God through music or painting? What is an effective outlet for you?

### **Act**

- What is something that God has been teaching you, but you haven’t put into practice? Find a way to live out that teaching this week.

### **Go Deeper**

- [How to Get Started Studying the Bible](#)

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