



## Lighten Your Load

Text: Matthew 11:28–30

Founding Pastor Ken Werlein

1. We are all often crushed under a weight of guilt from believing that we are not “enough.”
  - a. What immediately pops into your mind for how this plays out in your life? Perhaps you wouldn’t describe your primary response as feelings of guilt, but perhaps it’s anxiety, a constant drive to do more, or putting on a charade so that others believe you are something that you are not.
  - b. Assess the things that cause you to feel guilt or any of the other experiences described above. What is in your control? What is not? What are the things beyond your control that cause you guilt? How can acknowledging this begin to lead you towards freedom?
  - c. What exactly are you believing that you have to be? Where does that belief come from? What part does the “comparison game” play in all of this? How does this belief line up with the teachings of Scripture or not?
  
2. Read Matthew 11:28–30.
  - a. Jesus offers rest for the weary and overburdened by asking us to take his “yoke.” How would you explain this metaphor in real-world, practical terms? And how does taking the “yoke” of Jesus relieve our burdens?
  - b. How does Jesus describe himself? How does this differ from the voice of condemnation, or anxiety, or constant pushing to do more that you regularly experience?
  
3. Pastor Ken emphasized the importance of understanding your identity.
  - a. What are the first 5 words that come to mind that you would use to describe yourself?
  - b. As you look at your list, do you see a predominance of who you are or what you do? How does that shed light on some of the struggles you have listed in the questions above?
  - c. In Colossians 3:3, Paul tells us that our life should be “hidden in Christ”. What does he mean? And how does this ease our burdens?
  
4. Taking upon yourself the yoke of Jesus also leads to freedom from having to prove yourself. As Gregg Matte counseled a young Ben Stuart, “Your job is simply to walk with God.”
  - a. What would be the impact of reframing your various roles to fit the statement, “I walk with God at/as I \_\_\_\_\_”?
  - b. Gregg taught Ben that this included the “worst case scenario” of being fired from Faithbridge because, “You’ll still have your job – to walk with God – and that’s a job you can never lose!” What would your worst case scenario be? And what challenges do you have believing you would be ok if that worst case scenario were to come true?

Challenge: When those voices of condemnation come or the pressure to prove yourself threatens to take control or when you are just out of gas and need access to the “supernatural strength” that Jesus wants to provide, what is a practical step you can take to stay yoked to Jesus and “re-gospel” yourself with the truth that Jesus came to be enough for you so that all you have to do is respond with faith and trust?

Prayer:

“Dear God,

The battle feels intense some days. We get tired and weak, weary and worn. It’s hard to keep going in the face of defeat. But help us to remember that you will never leave us, that you’re our Refuge and our Strength, an ever-present help in trouble. We know that the enemy wouldn’t be fighting so hard against us, if we weren’t making a difference for your Kingdom. He wouldn’t be trying so hard to stop us, if he didn’t think you had so much good still in store. Remind us that the battle belongs to you, and whatever we’re up against can be taken down in one fail swoop by your Mighty Hand. Help us to trust you more, to never waste time spinning our wheels and wrestling or fighting in our strength. Please forgive us Lord for the times we’ve failed to lift our hands to you, for the days we’ve forgotten to come to you first. Fill us with the Power of your Holy Spirit this day. Fill us with your joy, fill us with your wisdom and discernment, fill us with constant reminders that Your Presence will go with us, and you will give us rest.

Thank you for the victories in our lives, that have no explanation except, “God did this.” We give you the glory and honor for all that you’re doing in our lives every day, even in the times we can’t see it all, or understand your ways.

Help us to keep our eyes on you. Help us to see when another soul around us needs to be encouraged too. Help us to be faithful to carry one another’s burdens, remembering that we’re all in this life together, and there’s great power in unity.

We love you and we need you. We lift up our hearts and hands to worship you. Thank you that your banner over us is love.

In the Mighty Name of Jesus we pray,

Amen.”

<https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/debbie-mcdaniel/for-those-who-are-battle-weary-prayer-and-reminders-of-hope.html>

## STUDY DEEPER

Deep soul weariness: We all experience it, though in different ways and for different reasons.

Sometimes we can point to a significant factor, but often we can't. Our weariness results from the cumulative, multilayered intersections of life's complexities, bodily frailties, emotional heartbreaks, and the consequences of sin. It surpasses understanding.

Because our burdens are not simple, they are not relieved by simplistic platitudes ("Cheer up! Things are bound to turn around!"). But a simple promise can relieve a complex burden, provided we believe that the power behind the promise is complex and strong enough to relieve our heaviness.

And into our weariness steps the most complex power in existence speaking a promise as simple, hopeful, and refreshing as we could possibly want:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28–30)

### **Come to Me**

The simplicity of Jesus's promise is both striking and refreshing. Jesus doesn't offer us a four-fold path to peace-giving enlightenment, like the Buddha did. He doesn't give us five pillars of peace through submission as Islam does. Nor does he give us "10 Ways to Relieve Your Weariness," which we pragmatic, self-help-oriented 21st century Americans are so drawn to. Unique to anyone else in human history, Jesus simply offers himself as the universal solution to all that burdens us.

And his simple promise is audacious: "Come to me." The only way that this isn't megalomaniacal lunacy is if Jesus is who he claims to be: the eternal Word made flesh, our Creator (John 1:1–3, 14; John 8:58; Hebrews 1:1–3). His simple promise implies a power behind it more than sufficient to lift what weighs us down.

What does coming to Jesus mean? When we read the context of this promise (Matthew 11–12), his meaning becomes clear. In his rebuke of the cities (Matthew 11:20–24) and religious leaders (Matthew 12:1–8) that saw firsthand his miraculous works, so clearly demonstrating who he was (John 5:36), and still refused to believe in him, we know that when Jesus said, "come to me," he meant, "believe in who I claim to be and therefore what I am able to do for you."

And here is where our burdened souls are tested. Will we believe in him; will we trust him? We want to rest our souls on the knowledge of how and when our burdensome problems will be addressed. But Jesus does not provide those details. He simply promises us that they will be addressed.

Jesus does not want our souls resting on the how and when, as if we are wise enough to understand and determine them. Rather he wants our souls resting on the surety that he will keep his promise to us in the best way at the best time. "Come to me," he says, "cast your anxieties on me for I care for you" (see 1 Peter

5:7). “Trust in me with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding” (see Proverbs 3:5), he says, “and you will find rest for your souls.”

### **Rest for Your Souls**

Our souls only find rest in hope. That’s what we’re frantically looking for whenever our souls are burdened and restless: hope. And that’s what most of the marketing of most of the products in the world tries to offer us: hope. But they are false hopes for soul-rest, providing only temporary distraction from or briefly masking the effects of our burdened souls. They don’t truly lighten our loads.

No, our burdened souls only truly find rest in one place:

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
for my hope is from him.  
He only is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.  
On God rests my salvation and my glory;  
my mighty rock, my refuge is God. (Psalm 62:5-7)

Jesus knows that he only is our salvation, our fortress, our mighty rock, our refuge. He is the one answer to every question, concern, fear, and need we will ever have. And so he simply and comprehensively offers us himself. For our hope is from him. Only in him will we find rest for our souls.

### **Take My Yoke and Learn from Me**

But if what he promises us is rest, why does he tell us to put on his yoke? A yoke is placed on a beast of burden in order to do some work. Is Jesus offering us rest or work?

That is precisely the question Jesus wants us to ask: What work must we do for him that supposedly will give us rest?

Jesus answered this question in John 6:29: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” And he answered it in John 15:4: “Abide in me” (like a branch in a vine). Believe and abide: that really is all the work God requires of us. Faith (believing and abiding) is resting on the hopeful promises of God. That is the yoke Jesus calls us to put on.

And what is happening here is a yoke-exchange. In the cross, Jesus takes our inconceivably and unbearably heavy yoke of sin’s condemnation and penalty, and offers us in exchange the easy yoke and light burden of simply trusting him. He does all the work and gives us all the rest. And his work not only fully addresses our sin problem, but also provides the supply of every other need we will ever have (Philippians 4:19). All we are required to do is trust him!

And if that wasn’t enough, in becoming human and dwelling among us, Jesus makes it possible for us to learn from him how to live by faith. That’s why the author of Hebrews tell us to,

[look] to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Believe, abide, and follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21). That's the light yoke Jesus calls us to put on. It is the only yoke in existence that gives us rest for our souls.

### **Let's Come to Jesus Together**

Jesus's great invitation for us to come to him, exchange yokes, and find rest is not intended for us to do in isolation. He intends for us to come to him in community, to come together. That's one massive reason the church exists.

We all bear burdens and become weary, but in different ways, for different reasons, and often at different times. When we are weary, we are easily discouraged and can be given to cynical unbelief. In those moments we are often not the best preachers for our souls. We need others to speak truth to us and help us believe in Jesus.

That's why we are not to neglect "to meet together, as is the habit of some, but [to keep on] encouraging one another" (Hebrews 10:25). We are to "exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

So if you are weary, for whatever reason, however complex, Jesus invites you to come. Come, take his light yoke of believing in him. And if it's hard, don't come alone. Come to Jesus with and through a believing friend. Believe, abide, and follow Jesus's example. And you will find rest for your soul.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/come-all-who-are-weary>