



### **Part 3: Yoked with Jesus**

Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus tells us that if we would come to him in humility, he would teach us an entirely new way to carry life. We would find rest that lasts.

“At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.’” Matthew 11:25-26

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Matthew 11:27

“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

Jesus tells us that if we would come to him in humility, he would teach us an entirely new way to carry life. We would find rest that lasts.

What is the yoke that Jesus offers?

How is this different from the yoke the world offers?

- Matthew 23:4
- Galatians 5:1
  - The yoke of Slavery
- Every sin, idol, and addiction promises to take away our burdens...and lies to us.

“A yoke is work instrument. Thus when Jesus offers a yoke, he offers what we might think tired workers need least. They need a mattress or a vacation, not a yoke. But Jesus realizes that the most restful gift he can give the tired is a new way to carry life.” (Fredrick Dale Bruner)

“Life is hard, with or without God. But what’s really hard – nearly unbearable for some – is facing the pain and suffering of life apart from God. Living in a godless, shepherdless, meaningless universe – that is really really hard. Ironically, in our attempts to avoid the difficult path of discipleship, we make our life harder, not easier. In our pursuit of happiness over obedience, we make our life less and less happy. In our resistance to Jesus’ yoke, we end up shouldering the crushing burden of our own unsatisfied desires” – John Mark Comer, Practicing the Way

How do we receive this yoke?

“I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.” Matthew 11:25-26

“No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Matthew 11:27b

Do we trust Jesus?

“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.” Matthew 11:29

### Discussion Questions

1. Read through Matthew 11:25-30. As a small group make a list of the following:
  - a. What stands out to you in this passage?
  - b. What phrases or images particularly capture your imagination?
  - c. What questions do you have about the passage?

- d. Consider reading the “Additional Scriptural Background” section for more insight.
2. A yoke was a common metaphor for the particular way of a Rabbi. How does this change the way you read this passage?
3. Jesus is offering a yoke in contrast to the ones the religious leaders and the world offer.
  - a. How have you seen religion be a heavy yoke to you or others?
  - b. What idols, sins, addictions (etc.) do you see promising to lift people’s burdens, but actually weighing them down? Where do you see that in other’s lives? What about in your own?
4. Consider this quote from Fredrick Dale Bruner: A yoke is work instrument. Thus when Jesus offers a yoke, he offers what we might think tired workers need least. They need a mattress or a vacation, not a yoke. But Jesus realizes that the most restful gift he can give the tired is a new way to carry life.”
  - a. Does this feel true to you? Why or why not?
5. Jesus says that his way is available to anyone who would come to him, humble like a child. What about this is comforting to you? What about this is a struggle for you?
6. Take a moment to discuss Jesus’s radical revelation of his own character and the Father’s character: *he is gentle and humble*.
  - a. How does this challenge your view of who God is?
  - b. Would it change your ability to “come to him” if you believed this is what he was like?
7. Consider two closing questions:
  - a. What heavy yoke is on your shoulders today? How can we pray for you?
  - b. What is holding you back from bringing that to Jesus and learning his way? How can we pray for you?

### **Additional Scriptural Background**

This passage, which famously is one of comfort and rest, comes on the tail of some of Jesus’s harshest criticism. He denounces the towns in which he has performed miracles, condemning them for being so hard of heart. He even goes so far as to say that it will be better on the day of judgement for Sodom than for Capernaum.

Scholars hear in Jesus’s words echoes of Jewish wisdom literature. Wisdom (often personified as a woman “lady Wisdom”) is often seen going through the streets, calling out to those who lack understanding “Come to me! Learn from me!”. For instance, the intertestamental author Ben Sira writes:

“Draw near to me, you who are uneducated,  
and lodge in the house of instruction.

<sup>24</sup> Why do you say you are lacking in these things,  
and why do you endure such great thirst?

- <sup>25</sup> I opened my mouth and said,  
“Acquire wisdom<sup>[1]</sup> for yourselves without money.  
<sup>26</sup> “Put your neck under her<sup>[1]</sup> yoke,  
and let your souls receive instruction;  
it is to be found close by.”  
<sup>27</sup> See with your own eyes that I have labored but little  
and found for myself much serenity.” (Sirach 51:23-27)

Isn't it striking how similar Jesus's words are? Much like Jesus is seen as the word or logic personified in the gospel of John (he is the *logos*), here he is wisdom personified. Yet, Jesus's words are strikingly different from the words of "Wisdom." Consider the words of Proverbs 1:

Wisdom cries out in the street;  
in the squares she raises her voice...  
Because I have called and you refused,  
have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,  
and because you have ignored all my counsel  
and would have none of my reproof,  
I also will laugh at your calamity;  
I will mock when panic strikes you,  
when panic strikes you like a storm  
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,  
when distress and anguish come upon you.  
Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;  
they will seek me diligently but will not find me.

Michael Bird writes of the harshness of Wisdom "Good advice doesn't help fools suffering the consequences of their own sin." (*The Story of God Commentary*). For those who ignore wisdom, there are no second chances, only harsh condemnation. At first Jesus sounds like Wisdom here as he condemns the towns who rejected his teaching. But then he puts the trope of wisdom on its head, extending an offer that is totally unprecedented...Instead of condemnation, another invitation, Instead of harsh words, comfort and compassion. Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden. Even if you've been foolish and rejected wisdom...come to Jesus.