

Abide

The Disciple's Identity: You in Christ

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The Disciple's Identity: You in Christ Matthew 11:28-30

If you have a Bible and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Matthew 11. First book in the New Testament. Matthew 11. We are going to be diving into a series called "Abide." What does it mean to abide in Christ? We are going to look at what it means to be in Christ, walk with Christ, to be a disciple of Christ, follower of Christ.

The goal of this study is not just for us to know what it means to be in Christ or to know what it means to be a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ, the goal is for all of us to be equipped to lead others to follow Christ and to lead others to be in Christ. We are no longer living Christianity for self consumption. The goal is not for us to look at some truths in Matthew 11 so that we can walk away and say I am glad that I learned that. The goal is for us to walk away from our time together this morning and be able to teach the truths of Matthew 11 so at the end of this series after walking through eight weeks in this series, the whole faith family will be equipped not just to know what it means to abide in Christ, but to lead others to abide in Christ.

And so we are no longer receivers. We are reproducers. The Word is not stopping with us. It is spreading through us. The goal is that we would be equipped after our time together. The goal is not for us just to learn the truths. The goal is for us to be able to teach these truths tomorrow as the word spreads through us.

Matthew 11. We are going to focus on verses 28 through 30, but I want to start in verse 25 just to get the context of the passage that we are about to look at together. Mathew 11:25:

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 was your good pleasure.'

'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.'

'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' (Matt. 11:25-30).

Father we pray that you would open our eyes and our hearts to the mammoth truths, comforting truths, that you have given us in this text. And we pray that these words would hit home in hearts all across this room and radically transform our view of what it means to be called followers of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Those last 3 verses, verse 28, 29, 30, I am convinced give one of the clearest, most powerful, most compelling, most beautiful pictures of Christianity the way Jesus designed it to be. And at the same time those verses give one of the most clearest, most powerful, most forceful rebukes of what we have created Christianity to be today. What I want you to see and I am trying to keep things very simple in these notes (replace with "today"), I want you to see two simple life changing truths that emerge from this text that I believe sum up what Christianity is. That depicts the radical nature of Christianity and what separates Christianity apart from every other religious system in the world. And I want for us to see two simple life changing truths that I am convinced that we have a dangerous tendency to completely miss out on their meaning in the church today.

Christianity Explained...

We give up all we have to Jesus.

Truth Number One: We give up all we have to Jesus. This is Christianity explained. We give up all we have to Jesus. Now the imagery that dominates this particular passage is the picture of a yoke. And a yoke is a strong, heavy wooden bar that is placed over an ox in order to allow that ox to pull a cart or pull a plow. And oftentimes a yoke could be singular, could be placed on one ox, but then also you can have a yoke that can be shared between two oxen. You have one ox on one side and the other on the other side and they would share the load together in a yoke.

And if you have a yoke like this that is shared between two oxen, then basically the picture is one of those oxen would be stronger than the other one. You would have a weaker ox on one side and a stronger ox on the other side. And the stronger ox would be able to basically pull the load of the weaker ox. You would have one ox that was more trained in the commands of the master that was more experienced that was stronger. As a result, the weaker ox would come in and they would be able to accomplish more together and especially for that weaker ox to be able to be pulled along basically by the stronger ox.

And so you have got picture of a yoke that dominates this passage. You have got that background. Then you come into the context here. And Jesus is speaking in the middle of the first century to a group of Jewish people who had been living under a very strict religious system, rigid religious system. They were surrounded by teachers of the law—Pharisees who interpreted the Old Testament law, and basically put the law on the people and said, "You need to do all these things." Not only the Old Testament law, but they had added 600 plus more laws that they needed to follow, rules and regulations.

And so you had a people whose religion was dominated by all the things that they were supposed to do. And that is what He is talking about with this burden that is heavy that has made them weary. You had people who were living under all these rules and all these regulations and they never felt like they could measure up. And they were constantly getting more laws and more rules and more regulations put on them.

In fact, hold your place. Go with me over real quickly to Matthew 23. I want to show you how Jesus uses the same word that He used for burden here in Matthew 11:28. Look at Matthew 23. He uses the same word down in verse 4. Read with me the first few verses of Matthew 23. I want you to see how Jesus addresses the teachers of the law and the problems that were going on because they were over loading the people with the law. Listen to this, Matthew 23:1, it says:

"Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach'"—here it is—"They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them" (Matt. 23:1-4).

And so that is the picture. You had a bunch of people that felt like heavy loads were constantly put on their shoulders in their religious system. And Jesus comes to them and He says, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." That is the context that He speaks these words into. He says, "Take my yoke upon you."

Now what does that mean? We give up all we have to Jesus. What does it mean to come to Him and come under His yoke? First of all it means we give Him the full weight of our sin. We give Him the full weight of our sin.

The picture that you have in 1st century Judaism is that a result of all these laws and regulations constantly being put on these people, they are constantly being reminded of the fact that they don't measure up. You had them constantly face to face with the fact that they couldn't do all of these things. And you had them feeling guilty, shame because they never could fulfill these laws, never could live up to these rules and regulations. And the more laws and the more regulations that were put on them, the guiltier they felt and the heavier the load was. And all the religious leaders and teachers of the law were doing was piling on guilt on the people because they kept piling on more laws and more laws and more laws.

When I read this passage, one of my biggest fears is that the church today is doing exactly what the teachers of the law were doing in the first century. When we did a study a few months ago on the affects of sin, guilt, shame and fear, and I had the opportunity to go out on the streets of Birmingham and ask different folks what they thought about guilt or what came to their mind when they thought about shame. You know what was interesting? Most often it was amazing the number of people when I said, "What do you think of when you hear the word guilt," they said the word church. They said I think of church. I always feel guilty leaving church. "I don't want to go to church," they said, "Because I constantly feel guilty when I walk away."

Now there are a variety of issues to deal with there, but it got me to thinking and as I was studying this text this week, it made me wonder if we in the church have not become guilty of doing the exact same thing the religious teachers, teachers of the law were doing in the 1st century by piling on more things to do and more things to do and more things to do, in order to live the Christian life and making people feel guiltier and guiltier and guiltier. Ladies and gentlemen I want to remind you that if you have placed your faith, if you have trusted in Jesus Christ, you do not bear the weight of your sin any more. He has bore that for you completely. He took the full weight of your sin and He nailed it to a cross for all of eternity. Psalm 103:12, *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."* Isaiah 43:25—God says to you, "I will remember your sins no more." He takes the full weight of our sin. This is what it means to come into the yoke. We give up all we have to Jesus. This is something we want to give up to Him. We give Him the full weight of our sin.

This is the beauty of Christianity. We don't have to bear the weight of our sin anymore. And this is what Jesus is calling them to, but this is not where Christianity stops. I am convinced it is where most of our Christianity has stopped. Most of us view Christianity as giving Jesus

our sin and that is it. The only problem is what do you do now? Now that you have given Jesus your sin, how are you going to live your life? How do you live the Christian life once you have given Jesus your sin? If you stop there, we have still got a lot of questions unanswered. And we are missing out on a lot of what Jesus is calling us to.

So I want you to see that when we talk about giving up all we have for Jesus, being a follower of Christ, giving Him the full weight of our sin, that is not where Christianity stops, it is where Christianity starts.

The second thing we give Him is we give Him our complete and utter inability to obey God. Our complete and utter inability to obey God. I know that "utter" and "complete" mean the same thing, but I thought about putting three or four other words in there just to make the point. We need to get the point here. Complete and utter, total, absolute, inability to obey God.

The yoke in this passage that Jesus is talking about, that He is contrasting His yoke with, it all revolves around the Jewish law. You have got the law on you, He is telling them. But here is the deal, Jesus is not saying, don't miss this, Jesus is not saying that the law is a bad thing. Jesus believed the law was a good thing. In fact, He said back in the Sermon on the Mount, remember? "I came not to abolish the law, but to what? To fulfill it." To fill it up.

The law is a good thing. Jesus is not saying, "You come to me because the law is not important, so you come to me and live however you want." That is not what He is saying. What He is saying is, "You come to me because you have got His law on you and there is no way that you can fulfill the law on your own." He says, "You have come to me because without me you will never be able to obey God and you will never be able to please God." But the danger of Christianity, contemporary Christianity, is we think we can.

We think we can obey the law. We think we can please God. I am convinced the majority of us who have come to faith in Jesus have taken it upon ourselves to try and live the Christian life on our own to the point that we are in danger of missing the point of Christianity altogether.

Please hear me. Follow with me on this. You look at how we define the Christian life. Most often we define the Christian life based on what we do. "If you are a Christian, then you pray, you study the Bible, you share the gospel, you watch decent movies, you don't smoke, you don't use profanity, you don't do all the things the world does. This is what makes you a Christian." And the majority of us begin to believe that God's pleasure in our lives is based on what we do or don't do for Him. And if we do enough then God will be pleased with us and if we don't do enough or we fail Him, then we have this sense that God is disappointed in us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the truth that we have got to come face to face with, the truth that is the foundation upon which all of Christianity is based is this. You will never be able to please God with what you do. You will never, ever, be able to please God with what you do! Legalism is living as if you can earn the grace and forgiveness and pleasure of God with your personal performance. Legalism is not just the trap that a few people fall into. I think we fall into it all the time. I think we are all tempted to fall into it.

It is kind of like the guy that used to be on TV that could spin all the plates at one time. You have all these little sticks or whatever they are and he would spread them out on the stage and he would get one plate spinning and he would run over and get another plate spinning and then he would have 5 or 10 plates spinning at the same time and he would just go

running back and forth. Before one was able to wobble and fall off he would go over there just in time and start spinning it again and he would go. Do you ever feel like that in the Christian life? "I got to pray. I got to pray. Ok. I got to study the Bible. Ok. I got to do this in my home. I got to do this at my work. I got to do this over here to live the Christian life. I have got to get all the plates going." We go from one plate to another trying to do all the right things that we are supposed to do as a Christian. Don't you ever get tired? Don't you ever get weary of that?

Now again not saying that those things are bad, but living the Christian life like we have got to do all these things in order to earn the pleasure of God misses the whole point. Running from plate to plate to plate. It is not easy trying to earn the pleasure of God with our performance. And the beauty of what Jesus is saying to us in Matthew 11:28-30 is that it is not the point of Christianity at all. It is not the point of Christianity at all. It was the curse of first century Judaism and I am convinced that it has become the curse of the 21st century Christianity.

Don't miss this. Ladies and gentlemen, the religious man or woman who is trying to balance all these plates in order to please God is just as far from God as the atheist is. The religious man or woman in this room who is trying to please God by balancing all the plates is just as far from God as the atheist is.

Let me give you an example of how this thinking creeps in. Let me give you two scenarios. Imagine this with me. Two scenarios. One scenario: Your alarm clock goes off in the morning and you wake up immediately because you know you have got quiet time ahead of you. And so you get out of bed and you go and you spend some time in prayer and you spend some time in the Word and things are going good from the very beginning of your day. You are off to work from there. It seems like everywhere you go you have got things planned out. The presence of God is so real in your life. Things are going well. You are walking with Him, living in communion with Him, and you get to the end of your day and on your way home, you have the opportunity to share the gospel with somebody else. That is Scenario Number 1.

Scenario Number 2: The alarm clock goes off the in the morning and you hit it about 6 or 7 times. Snooze, snooze, snooze until there is not chance you are having a quiet time, the morning is anything but quiet for you. You get up, rush, get ready, and you are off to work and everything is disorganized. Nothing is working out the way it was supposed to. You are going throughout your day and you don't have anything planned and the presence of God seems anywhere but near your life at this point. It is nowhere close. You are running through trying to get things done. Finally you get to the end of an exhaustive day. Some of you have been there this week. You get to the end. You get to the end of your day and you head home and on your way home you have the opportunity to share the gospel with someone.

Now with those two scenarios, here is the question that I want to ask you. In which of these scenarios do you think God is more likely to bless you in leading that person to Christ? Our tendency is, the majority of us would say, "Definitely the first scenario." But why do we even think that? Here is why we even think that. Because we really believe that God is blessing our lives is somehow based on our performance during the day.

Why would God be more likely to bless here than there? And our answer might be because over here, I was walking with Him. Over here, I just wouldn't feel worthy. I have ignored Him all day. I wouldn't be where I need to be spiritually in order to be ready for that, so He probably wouldn't use me as much. That is uncovering the hidden truth at the core of our

Christianity. We have got to weed out this idea that God's blessing is based on our performance. It is not. It is not based on our performance. God's blessing in either one of these scenarios is based on His grace and nothing else. It is not based on what you and I have to bring to the table. The whole point of Christianity is the best that we bring to the table, is still not good enough.

One Puritan preacher said, "Even the tears of our repentance need to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ." The whole point of what Jesus is saying is you spend your entire life trying to measure up and trying to follow the law and trying to do the right deal to follow after God and please God and you will fall short every single time.

Listen to the words of Ian Thomas. These words pierce me as I read them this week. Ian Thomas said,

I am talking about some Sunday School teachers. I am talking about some pastor in his pulpit. I am talking about some missionary on the field. I am talking about many ordinary, earnest Christians. They are wonderful people. You would love to meet them. They talk all the language of salvation and they mean every word they say. They are not hypocrites, but they are tired. Many of them desperately tired. They are overwhelmed inwardly with a sense of defeat and frustration and futility and barrenness. Story after story could be told of these men and women who bravely, doggedly out of a sense of duty, love and devotion go on and on and on yet deep down in their hearts they are tired. Again and again they have got down by their bedside and cried out to God with tears in their eyes, 'God you know how barren I am, you know how empty I am and you know how stale I am and you know it,' and yet they do not know the answer... This is the curse of Christendom. This is what paralyzes the activity of the church of Jesus Christ on earth today. In defiance of God's Word, God's mind, God's will, and God judgment, men and women everywhere are prepared to dedicate to God what God condemns. The energy of the flesh. There is nothing quite so nauseating or pathetic as the flesh trying to be holy.

Ladies and gentlemen, the whole point of Christianity is that we have given Jesus our complete and utter inability to obey God. We can't do it. So stop believing that you can measure up and do enough to please and obey Him. Stop fighting the battle that you will never be able to win. Even though you fight it your entire life, you will never be able to win. Stop fighting the battle. Praise be to God, He has already won for you! You don't have to measure up to the law because He measures up to the law. You don't have to learn to obey God, and try to obey God and try to do all the right things because He has already done that. He has accomplished it for you.

And the whole point of Christianity is coming to Him and giving up all we have and saying, "I can't do it." And as a result we no longer have to come into this setting and ever think that God is disappointed in us because God has taken all of your sin and all of your inability to please Him. He has nailed it to a cross and when He looks at you, He sees you, not disappointed in you, but He sees you and delights in you. Not because of one ounce of your performance this week, but all because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ His Son.

This is what Jesus is saying. He is saying, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I give you rest." It is not about what we bring to the table. It is about what He brings to the table. We give up all we have to Jesus. We can't do it.

Jesus gives up all He has to us.

And the beauty of it is the second truth: Jesus gives up all He has to us. He gives up all He has to us. Listen to what He says. He says, "*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart*" (Matt. 11:29). This is the part that has always confused me about this text. If Jesus is trying to free me up, then why is He putting another yoke on me? The whole point is I don't need anything else on me. Right?

Remember back to the picture we have got of the yoke and you have got the stronger ox and the weak ox. Now see you have got the one whose strength is infinite and perfect and the one who knows intimately the commands of the master and the one who is experienced in obeying them to the very end. He is the one who is inviting you to take His yoke upon yourself. You come into the yoke with me and see that the stronger ox now makes it possible for the weaker ox to produce all that he does. It is all based on Him being in the yoke. Jesus gives up all that He has to us.

What does He have for us? Number one goes back to the full weight of our sin. Number one: He gives us full pardon for our sin. The standard of God is perfection. The standard of God is perfection. Don't miss this. It is not that Jesus had standards that were lower than the religious teachers of the law. His standards were higher than the religious teachers of the law. Matthew 5:48, "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" "My standard is perfection," Jesus says. Not one person will ever enter the gates of heaven who does not live up to that standard.

I don't care how great a father or mother, husband, wife we have been, how much money we have or how great a life we have lived, we will never be able to live up to that standard. And if we stand before Him on that day apart from Jesus Christ, then all the things we have done in this world will fall miserably short of the standard that God has set for acceptance in His presence.

But the beauty of it is, in this passage it is showing us we can't measure up and we can't do it, it is also showing us that the God who became flesh and came down to dwell among us and He Himself picked up the Old Testament Law and He carried it. And He was tempted in every way, but He never dropped it once. He was pressed in on every side and He never dropped it once. He was weakened in every way that the world could weaken Him yet He never dropped it once. He perfectly fulfilled the Old Testament Law so when you stand in the yoke with Him and now you are before the Father in heaven, Jesus says, "He is with me." And you get in based on the perfect standard of Jesus Christ. He gives us full pardon for all our sins. Praise be to God that through the work of Jesus Christ, His perfect life and then His death for the burden for all our sins, yours and mine, on a cross, that He rose from the grave and as a result, He can say to us, "You are not guilty any more. You are pardoned forever."

He gives us full pardon from our sins and that leads to, results in peace with God. What is interesting is He uses the word rest twice. He says, "Come to me all you are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest." The first time He uses that word rest literally means "relief". Almost like a sigh of relief, rejuvenation. "You can find rest in the love of God." That is the picture. You find rest. It's the same picture in Romans 5:1, "*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand*" (Rom. 5:1-2). We have peace with God. We don't have anything separating us from God any more. Jesus has given us full pardon for our sin. I hope, I pray the truth brings home it's a reality for those who are ridden with guilt. He has given us full pardon for our sin and we trust in Him, we come to Him.

But we have still got our complete and utter inability to obey the law, so what did Jesus do with that? He gives us His complete ability to obey the law. His complete and total ability He gives us in order to enable us to obey God. This is what Jesus gives us in return. Now this is where it gets really beautiful. Listen to this. *"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"* (Matt. 11:29). That word, "Learn" there is the same word that is translated disciple in Matthew 28 later in this book. Make disciples of all nations that we talk about all the time. It is the same word here.

So basically, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, learn to be my disciple." And He says, "I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls." This is a pretty astounding truth that Jesus is saying here. You learn to be my disciple and you will find rest for your souls. There is no other religious teacher in the history of the world. No other teacher at all that would equate learning with complete and total rest. How many students who have gone back to school would say, "Now that I am back in school I just feel so relieved and rested?" Finally, I have got rest for my spirit, my mind. I feel so rested. It is not what we feel when we are studying or learning or following.

I was preaching at a seminary and I was walking the campus and I saw seminary students with Hebrew flash cards trying to memorize. There was no rest in their eyes. There was no rest anywhere near them. Not rest at all. No relief. That is not the picture that was there.

I remember right after I had finished my Ph.D, and I had gone to Heather's school where she taught and I was going to read to her class. And I looked at these sweet little four-year-olds, and when Heather had stepped out of the room for a second, I just looked at them and I said, "I feel somewhat sorry for all of you." These kids are looking at me, and I said, "You've got twenty plus years of this ahead of you, and I would not trade..." About that time Heather walks back in, and she's like, "David, what are you saying?" And I said, "Nothing. Nothing."

Here is the beauty. Don't miss this. How can Jesus say, "Take my yoke upon you? You learn from me and you will find rest for your souls." Because here is the beauty of Christianity, this whole picture of Him giving us His ability to obey God, to please God. When we join in the yoke with Him, and we learn from Him, what are we learning to do? We are learning to trust in Him and not in ourselves. And as a result, slowly, surely, we are relaxing in the yoke and learning to let Christ do in us what all along we have been trying to do for ourselves.

Now, rest in Christ is becoming a deeper and deeper reality on a day-by-day basis. Why? Because we are learning to let go of the strain of trying to do this Christian life on our own and we are learning to let Him do it for us.

This is huge. "Are you saying that we sit back and don't do anything?" Absolutely not. It is not a passive picture, it is learning, it is following, it is going after the law. It is not because the law doesn't matter anymore which is what many people have done. And the emphasis that the church has had on legalism they say we don't have to follow the law. On the contrary, we are free not to forget the law; we are free to obey the law. And now we have in us, Christ Himself who enables us to follow the law.

Here is the beauty here. The reason that Jesus can give us rest is not because He is giving us the rules, here's the regulations, here's the law, here's the commandments, now follow them. Instead the beauty of Christianity, what makes Christianity not just another religion, not just another ethic that we live up to, is the picture of Christ Himself in us, enabling us to follow the law, enabling us to please God, enabling us to obey God. And now when we live

our lives and it is Christ in us living through us, then we bring great glory to our Father because He is doing it in us. And it is all saturated in Christ and the one who is giving us the grace moment by moment, day by day, there is nothing, absolutely nothing in your Christian life that you are intended to do on your own. It is all intended. Every single prayer we pray, every single step we take, every single thought is intended to be saturated with Jesus Christ. And the picture of being in a yoke with Him is that He takes over more and more every day and we find more and more rest in Him every day. Do you want this? This is the picture of coming into the yoke with Him.

Martin Luther said it best. He said, "Here the bottom falls out of all merit, all powers and abilities of reason or the free will that men dream of. And it all counts as nothing before God. Christ must do and must give everything." He does everything.

It is the same picture when you look back in verse 25. Remember when He said, "*Father...you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children*" (Matt. 11:25). We see that imagery all throughout the New Testament. It is not the wise people who have everything that this world has to offer us; it is the foolish who experience God. It is the poor in spirit who experience God. Little children. Does that mean if you are smart that you can't follow Jesus? No, absolutely not. But it means that you have got to come to the end of yourself. Where you realize that it is not about what you bring to the table, it is about what He does. Ladies and gentlemen, the baggage we bring to the table is certainly heavy. Jesus Christ is certainly able to pick us up and take us everywhere He desires for us to go.

What happens when Christianity becomes a journey by which Christ carries us instead of us trying to carry ourselves? You have been freed from that obligation. He has freed you up. One writer put it this way "It is when the soul become utterly passive, looking and resting on what Christ is to do, that its energies are stirred to their highest activities and we work most effectively because we know that He works in us." What happens when a faith family stops trying to do it on our own and lets Christ and His yoke do it through us and for us. I believe He carries us to places we never could have fathomed before.

The result of Him giving us His complete ability to obey God, the result is peace of God. Don't miss it. The One who calls you to be righteous is now living righteously through you. The One who calls you to preach the gospel to all nations is now preaching the gospel in all nations through you. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it. And He gives us the peace of God.

The second time, He uses the word rest, He says, "You will find rest for your souls." It is the picture of the Hebrew word, "Shalom". It is existential peace; this pervading peace; this eternal peace that comes in trusting in Christ and walking in Christ. That comes when we let go of ourselves and we let Christ do what only He can do through us. "*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*" (Matt. 11:28-29). For listen to what the sovereign creator of the universe in the flesh says. He says, "*I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*" (Matt. 11:29). Do you want that? Then give Him the full weight of your sin and give Him your complete and utter absolute inability to obey God and please Him and let Him give you all that He has got, full pardon for all your sin and His very own ability to please and obey God. And then we will be on the way to experiencing what it means to be in Christ.

Will you bow your heads with me? With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, I want us to do something a little different to respond to the Word. Ok. I am guessing that across this room there are people who are weary and burdened. That you feel weighed down trying to

keep all the plates spinning in your life in your Christianity and I want to urge you to say to Him that I want your rest. I am ready to give up. For some of you that is the first time that you might say that. There are many of you, and don't miss the danger of this passage, please don't miss the danger because we can carry on in our religion and never enter the yoke of Christ and miss out on the whole point of Christianity and yet be in church every single Sunday of our lives. And I want to ask you first and foremost, across this room with our heads bowed and our eyes closed; do you know that you know beyond the shadow of a doubt, you know that you are in the yoke with Jesus? I am not asking what your spiritual resume is. I am not asking all that you have done. That misses the whole point of Christianity. Are you in the yoke with Jesus? And if you are not, I want to urge you in just a moment when we begin to respond, to say, "I want to be in the yoke with Him." For the first time today, I want to give Him the full weight of my sin and my complete and utter inability to obey Him and let Him transform me from the inside out. I want to invite you to enter the yoke with Him.

Second, if you are a Christian and you know you are in the yoke and we know that Scripture teaches that once we are in the yoke, we don't leave the yoke, but for some reason it has been a major strain and you have been trying to do all these things and I want to invite you to say, "I want to relax in the yoke." Maybe for the first time in a long time, I am going to trust in Him.

Father I pray that you would bring rest for souls; that you would draw people to yourself. And God I pray that the result would be burdens and heavy loads lifted. That we would no longer feel the weight of trying to even live out the Christian life on our own, but we would trust you with that. And I pray that you would supply us with all the grace that we need to let go of ourselves and trust in you completely. Let us find rest for our souls in Him. In Jesus' name, amen.

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