



Show Me Your Ways Through Stress (Matthew 11:28-30)

Stress is a part of everyone's life. There is good stress, such as the stress and anxiety involved with preparing for an exciting job interview, and there is not so good stress, such as the stress and anxiety of worrying about a loved one that is facing an illness. We all have experienced stress in one way or another at some point in our lives. It can be a very emotionally draining experience when we feel that we are under a lot of stress and all aspects of our lives are often affected.

We all have unique ways of dealing with the stresses in our lives. Some people exercise. Some people turn to food for comfort. Some of us pray and meditate. Some of us become so high strung that it is hard for anyone to be around us. But in our Scripture for today, Jesus offers us an invitation that will conquer even the most stressful situations. He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." "Come to me," enter into a relationship with Jesus and your lives will be transformed. He will bring peace into your life and calm the worries of your heart. As we read further, the Scripture states: "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." When we hear the word "yoke" we often think of the piece of wood that unites a pair of oxen as they pull a plow or cart. Most people associate bearing a yoke with hard labor or something painful. But the yoke that Jesus invites us to carry with Him is different. It is not about hard labor, but about joining Him in the yoke so that we can walk and work together! Granting us rest is not about removing what is stressful to us, but about drawing us to Him in a close and trusting relationship. Often the burden we feel is not necessarily removed, but our thoughts and responses to that burden are changed as we begin to love Jesus and trust Jesus, believe His promises and rely on His power. As we respond to His invitation, we begin to feel the weight of our stress shift from our shoulders to His. Although our stressful situation may not be fully resolved, we discover God's peace and relief as we walk with Him, sharing our load together.

Discussion Questions and Reflection Activities

1. Think of a stressful and trying time in your life. How did you respond to that stress? How did the situation affect other areas of your life? Were you ever able to “share the yoke” with Christ? Share with others about your experience.
2. What are some of the things we are burdened with in our lives today (work, family, health, loss, finances, etc.)? Discuss these together for a few moments. How are we handling these burdens? Imagine that each of these burdens is a rock, about six inches in diameter. How long could you carry them around this room before you would have to stop and readjust your load or rest? Discuss how Jesus can give us rest from our burdens. What do we need to do in order to achieve this?
3. What does it mean to take Jesus’ yoke upon us? By taking His yoke upon us, we are able to follow His direction and do His will for our lives. Christ’s yoke is a perfect fit and because we walk with Him, our burdens are light.

Using the word **STRESS**, write an acrostic poem that helps define the word in the context of our lesson today.

Prayer:

Close with prayer thanking Jesus for sharing our burdens and giving us rest. You might also spend a few moments in silence – resting in God’s presence. Soft, meditative music playing in the background might help folks to relax and rest.