

## Working from Rest

*“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 my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30 (NIV)*

I had never been attracted to this picture of taking on Jesus' yoke. I think it merged with images I had of dejected slaves in wooden yokes being dragged along to a life of misery. Yokes were never designed for people. So why does Jesus use this image? Was he looking at the familiar scene of a pair of oxen drawing a heavy cart? He must have been aware of the sense of burden and strain that his hearers lived under - as if they were yoked and heavy laden. And he knew how light and easy and restful his way of living was in comparison. He knew that they had not been created to bear those heavy burdens or to carry that uncomfortable yoke. So he calls to them *“Come to me...and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me...”*

**Jesus can only offer us what he already has.** He has rest, so he can give it. He has joy, so he offers his joy. He has peace, so he can speak it into lives and storms and fearful hearts. And he has a yoke that is light and easy and restful and joyous. I have been drawn to that restfulness, but not the yoke, because I didn't understand it. But then one day I asked these questions, and a light went on. Where does he find his rest? Who was **he** yoked to?

The Spirit came upon him for empowerment as he began his ministry. The 'Comforter' he promises us (John 14:16) is to fortify or strengthen us, not to make us cosy and safe. In fact, a life under the leading of the Spirit becomes an adventure that at times can become unnerving! Jesus found his rest, his peace, his security, his 'ease' in the love and affirmation of his Father, his Abba. *“You are my Beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you.” (Luke 3:22)* His Father said this to him before he had even begun any ministry. He rested in this approval and love. He did not have to seek approval from anyone. He had it already from the only one who mattered. It anchored and sustained and strengthened him all the way through his many testings and trials.

He was also at peace about his purpose in life. He knew he had come to do the will of his Father, which was progressively unfolded to him, and that together they would accomplish it. (John 13:1) His life-style of listening to the Father ensured he did not falter or was led astray.

What do we need to **learn** from him that will enable us to take his yoke – and will enable our lives to become easy and restful?

I believe the answers are in the preceding verses of chapter 11. In verse 25 Jesus is rejoicing with the Father. He is delighted that only those with the heart of a 'little child' can receive revelation about the things of the Kingdom – the way life is when God is in charge. And the Father loves it this way! It gives him pleasure too! (v 26 Imagine them grinning at each other and giving a high-five!)

So does it follow that Jesus had a child-like heart towards his Father, his Abba (Daddy)? Surely it does! His eyes were continually on his Father, much as a little boy would watch and imitate his dad. For he daily had revelation (he saw that which was hidden from others) about what the Father was doing and what things meant and what he should say. We know this because he often said *“It is the Father who is doing this – it is the Father who is saying these things.”* **He was 'yoked' to his Abba, his Father in love.** Together they lived this life and did this work on earth. And his yoke was easy and light and joyful and restful and full of insights and power and bathed in love - without being a strain at all. (With the exception of his redemptive work, when he took on our sin and punishment.)

He lived out what he taught to others. *"Don't worry about having enough food or drink or clothing... your Heavenly Father already knows all your needs, and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern."* (Matt.6:31-32 N Liv) He knew the care and provision of his Abba on a daily basis. This was clearly a partnership of love. A restful, easy yoke, that we are invited to share.

Then in verse 27b he says that we can only know the Father if "the Son chooses to **reveal** him" to us – and his next words are, "Come to me, and I will give you rest. Learn from me..." I believe that he wants to reveal to us the depth of Abba's love, his constant care, his total acceptance, his abounding provision... so we can rest, just as he, the Beloved Son rests. Did he not say "**My** peace I give to you," (John 14:27) "**My** joy will be in you" (John 15:11)? He found peace and joy in his union with the Father. So will we - as he reveals our Abba, our Father to us. He came to do just that. (see study)

These are the things he wants us to learn from him.

In John 17:26 Jesus prays that *"the love you (Father) have for me may be in them."* This delighted, tender love is the same love Jesus experienced. You see Father's love does not have variances or degrees. It is not that one day he loves us a lot, and another, not much. His love is constant, unvarying. This is what is meant by 'eternal' - not fluctuating or varying or dying away. He cannot love you more than he does now, and he cannot love you less. It is a constant, tender love; a perfect, complete, lacking nothing love that has the capacity to push out all our fears. (1 John 4:18) And it is set upon us, because we are "in Christ." It has nothing to do with our merits and everything to do with Jesus' position as the Beloved Son. What a place to rest! What a place to work from. And what a way to work – as his Spirit reveals what the Father is doing and saying and as the Father's love invades our lives.

- What would our relationships be like if we basked daily in the approval and love of our delighted Abba, Father?
- What would our lives be like if we were yoked in love to this all-loving, all-providing Father?
- What would our work be like if we had nothing to prove or to defend, but lived in child-like simplicity with a big Daddy alongside of us guiding us all the way as Jesus did?

So let's ask, and keep on asking –

*"Jesus, reveal our Abba, our Daddy to us. Help us to be those 'little children' you talk about, with the heart of a trusting son or daughter with our all-loving, all-powerful Dad. We want this restful, gentle, joy-filled life that you offer, every day."*

**Study:** Soak your heart in these verses – asking for revelation of the Father's love through Jesus.

Matt: 11:25-30

1. Who does the Father reveal truth to?
2. Who does Jesus want to reveal to us?
3. What does Jesus want to teach us?

John 1:14-18

1. What was the glory that John saw?
2. Where was Jesus before he came to earth?
3. What did he come to reveal to us?

John 14:1-11

1. Jesus declares he is 'the Way' – to what? V.6
2. If we look at Jesus, who will we see?
3. Whose work is Jesus doing?

John 17:25-26

1. What did Jesus make known (reveal) to the disciples?
2. Why did he make this known to them?
3. When will he stop revealing?

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*This is from Henri J. M. Nouwen 'The Inner Voice of Love'*

There is within you a lion and a lamb. Spiritual maturity is the ability to let lamb and lion lie down together. Your lion is your adult, aggressive self. It is your initiative-taking and decision-making self. But there is also your fearful, vulnerable lamb, the part of you that needs affection, support, affirmation and nurturing.

When you heed only your lion you will find yourself overextended and exhausted. When you take notice only of your lamb, you will easily become a victim of your need for other people's attention. The art of spiritual living is to fully claim your lion and your lamb. Then you can act assertively without denying your own needs. And you can ask for affection and care without betraying your talent to offer leadership.

Developing your identity as a child of God in no way means giving up your responsibilities. Likewise, claiming your adult self in no way means that you cannot become increasingly a child of God. In fact, the opposite is true. The more you can feel safe as a child of God, the freer you will be to claim your mission in the world as a responsible human being. And the more you claim that you have a unique task to fulfil for God, the more open you will be to letting your deepest need be met.

The Kingdom of peace that Jesus came to establish begins when your lion and your lamb can freely and fearlessly lie down together.

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