

# When Sleep is not Enough

by

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***“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.”  
Matthew 11:28-29 (ESV)***

There are times in a man’s life when he is so weary that sleep can’t solve his need. In fact, he is so *body and spirit* tired, he cannot sleep. He wrestles through the night with an agitation of soul, mind and body, and at the end of his lonely vigil through the night, he emerges an exhausted man trying to cope with his day. Disrupted sleep is only one symptom of many indicating something is not right within the man. Different aspects in him battle within, keeping him from rest, recovery and they even cause relationships to be fractured. Because of this turmoil within him, this weary man then begins to act out of this state of exhaustion, causing him to say and do some things that he would not normally say and do. The place he is living in is a battlefield for the enemy keeping him from a joyful connection with Christ, and in a minefield of discouragement. He must act with all diligence, if he can, to get out of this place. His bed and simply a good night’s sleep is not the place he will find rescue from this battlefield. It is not in that common resting place that a weary soul is restored. Rather, it is when he gets alone for a while in an intense time in the presence of his Shepherd King that the process begins and is completed. I wonder how many of you men can identify with this man I’m speaking of? If you are this man, then come and join a crowd of other men like us, for I am right there with you. Let us go to that place Jesus invites us to, and let us find rest for our weary souls. Where is this place? **It is alone, and in His yoke .... next to Him.**

Very few of you who are reading this devotional know what a *yoke* is and how it works. Defined, it means: ***“A wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plow or cart that they are to pull.”*** In other words, it is a device placed over the shoulders of beasts to harness their power, and direct them for the purpose their master has in mind. OK, I get this, for I had a grandfather who worked harvesting trees by pulling them out of the woods behind a team of oxen. I’ve seen it. But, why would Jesus use this illustration for giving us rest? That sounds like work, right? Maybe it is because Jesus was making a deeper point, not about removing a burden, but rather about helping us carry a burden. If we only needed sleep to get us by, then a few good hours in the sack would do it. But, when we are *spirit weary* like I’m talking about, then it takes something else. It requires the *yoke of Christ*. What is it about the *yoke* that would help us? Let’s think on it.

At first blush we would understand that the *yoke* attaches us to something, and most of the time it is a load such as a cart. But, in the case of talking to people, as He was when He said it, Jesus would not be talking about the actual, physical aspect of pulling a cart around under a *yoke*. This is when we must look at the *yoke* as a metaphor. A metaphor is not saying an animal *yoke* is what Jesus was suggesting we wear but rather a resemblance to it, or a deeper truth as a comparison. For instance, the animal *yoke* actually gives leverage to the beast for carrying its load. We need to understand this, for when we compare this aspect to how Christ’s *yoke* works for us, it would give us leverage for carrying our load. We can understand that He is saying His *yoke* strengthens us. Then, there is the fact that the *yoke* a beast wears couples two beasts together, adding more power for pulling the load. So, how does a “two person” *yoke* work, metaphorically speaking? It puts two people under the same “*yoke*” so that they both can carry the burden. Now, this is where it gets to the heart of what Christ was teaching. He was saying in essence, ***“Come to ME, and I will get in the yoke with you.”*** Man, does that thrill a weary

man like me, and make me want to get under His *yoke*! But remember, it is not like getting a good night's sleep. It is not that simple. It requires something more of us to do, for Jesus indicated that we must ***voluntarily take His yoke upon us***. In fact, it might even require a dedicated effort to pull our life away from our busy life, to get under His *yoke*. Most men say they don't have the time to get away, and they could make a legitimate case for their argument. But, that time in the *yoke* that they deny for themselves will come to them when they collapse from a heart attack or depression or burnout or bad decisions. Then they will have plenty of time for it. But, doesn't it make good sense that this collapse could be avoided if we will look at the warning signs in our life and understand that running to the *yoke* is the smartest thing we can do? I said that I speak as one who needs to go to this *yoke*, for I share with you that I am weary and heavy laden of late. That's the bad news. The good news is it doesn't have to stay that way with me, nor with you. So, let's discuss some various ways, based on need and intensity, that can help us find the *yoke* of Christ:

To begin, in my opinion the *yoke* is different from *abiding* with Christ. ***Abiding*** is a *live in, dwell in, permanent place of residency* with Christ. We live in close proximity with Christ when we abide with Him, whether we have an extra heavy burden to carry or not. Our burdens come and go in weight and intensity, even if we are abiding with Christ. We call it life. The *yoke*, on the other hand, is God's help to carry those burdens. Jesus said He would get in the *yoke* with us to help us carry our burdens and our part is easy, for He does the heavy lifting. By the way, when we are in the *yoke* with Christ, there is another aspect. We also help Him with His burden for making disciples and declaring the Gospel. But that is another aspect of the *yoke* that can be discussed later. Let's stick with the *yoke* helping our burden right now. I have found that the ways I have been able to get under Christ's *yoke* include:

- **Recreation, Exercise, Proper Diet, Good Health:** What I will mention following this bullet point deals with the spiritual connection that is disrupted. However, we sometimes confuse a spiritual issue with a physical one. Therefore, it would be good to always give attention to our health, for stress and stressful conditions are better faced when we feel good. So, pay attention to your body.
- **A daily quiet-time and journaling through scripture:** This is a daily practice I have had better than 35 years now. It might be seen as daily maintenance and preparing for the day. It is the way I "self-feed" and is the climate of my life. It is essential for abiding in Christ for me.
- **An Extended Time of Prayer:** We have found that most men are frightened by the thought of having an extended time alone with God in prayer ... that is until they do it. When men go with us and spend time with God using *The Prayer Cottage and the Sacred Garden* as their guide, most of them come back saying they now have something they will do for the rest of their life. When my daily quiet-time is not enough, I grab a lunch, my Bible and journal, and make my way to a stream in the woods to hang out with God. This helps me get under His *yoke*.
- **A Retreat:** Men's retreats are a good way to be refreshed and encouraged, and in some way get under Christ's *yoke*. Unfortunately, the retreat ends too quickly and it proves only to be a reprieve from the burden that a man had carried into the conference. He goes back to the burden after the retreat if he didn't find a major change while there. A retreat helps, but it will not sustain.
- **Sabbatical:** A sabbatical is not a vacation, nor is it a rigid routine. A good sabbatical has all of the components of the aspects listed above, but it is taken for days not hours. It is a time of unplugging from the busyness of life, and leaving it behind if only for a few days or weeks, in order to plug into God in an unstructured, deeper way. Taking a sabbatical for most men is unheard of. I would venture a guess that 99.9% of the men reading this devotional have never taken a sabbatical, do not know how it works, and do not think they will ever have one. But if you can take one, then it could be the most important and life changing event in your life. It is a time to empty one's self and go to the "desert," so to speak, and allow God to feed you just what you need. It is the most serious

commitment one can make to get under the *yoke* of Christ, and it should come when it is most needed to understand how important it can be. Pray that one day you could experience this opportunity.

Concerning a sabbatical... I am very blessed to have a group of men who are guardians of my spiritual health. They see their role, among other things, to nurture and protect those essential aspects of my life. You see, I am the kind of guy who doesn't do that for myself, and I can flame out while burning for Christ. I'm not proud of it. In fact, I am sure you probably think I should be on top of this issue by this time in my life. But the truth is, it is in my wiring. It is my nature that sneaks up on me. Like every one of you where there are some real good things about you and some real bad things, it is the same with me. Hopefully we manage to avoid the real bad possibilities by our general walk with Christ. But, there are some times that come on us that we just don't know how to manage. But, Jesus Christ knows, and this is where His *yoke* comes in. He literally *yokes* our nature to His, and we learn from Him as He promised. The men I have entrusted my life to have seen a need for my wife and me to go to a place that I can be restored and get under the *yoke* of Christ in a very special way. I need it, and if I continue to play my role in Influencers, the ministry needs it. Therefore, in a few weeks I will be going on an extended sabbatical to find that *yoke*, and to transfer some burdens I've been feeling lately. It has been a glorious, and yet very challenging year for me, and these men are protecting me from myself, and getting me to the place I need. I look forward to sharing with you what happens in that time away with God.

Men, I will say this in closing. All of you need men like "my" men in your life, who have a mission to nurture and protect you. You also need to be a man in someone else's life that does the same for him. Pray that God will give you men like these, and that you will become one yourself. Pray that you will listen and submit to those men, and that God will show you the way to His *yoke*, for it is there that you will learn from Him how to live life.