




# Be Refreshed

A 5-Day Devotional Journey With Jesus

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Jesus said, "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."

Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV)

## Day 1

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,  
and I will give you rest.”



Wouldn't it be nice to go away on holiday, maybe to some tranquil destination? Imagine glorious sunshine, a sandy beach, trees gently swaying in the soft breeze, water quietly lapping in the background, food and drinks at your side. Even the thought is relaxing!

Unfortunately however, Jesus' invitation to come and find rest does not include any of these things. We might prefer to stop and take a break; but what Jesus proposes is quite different. He offers *refreshing* in the midst of daily life.

If that doesn't sound particularly appealing at first, read on. Jesus is offering an inner refuelling. Something that will recharge us in a way far superior to any holiday we could ever have. That's because His refreshing is sourced from a different realm. It comes from the vastness, power and splendour of the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, it is simply unparalleled here on earth.

There's only one way we can gain this inner refuelling from the heavenly realm, and that's by receiving it from Jesus Himself. He sees our weariness, and He has an abundance of refreshing available. But like an RSVP, His invitation requires a response on our part.

Unfortunately, Jesus' audience in Galilee did not respond to this invitation. The towns of Capernaum, Chorazim and Bethsaida witnessed many miracles and heard the bulk of Jesus' teaching,

yet they remained unchanged (Matthew 11:20-26). Jesus' prayer suggests these people were preoccupied with human-based solutions, and this blinded them to God's Kingdom - even though Jesus was living among them.

We might assume that being with Jesus would be enough. However, this passage shows that simply being in Jesus' presence doesn't guarantee we will be refreshed. By the same token, while some human-based solutions can certainly be helpful to an extent, what Jesus offers far surpasses any of these things.

If we want to be properly refuelled, we must be intentional and accept His invitation. This means going beyond "being around" Jesus, to engaging with Him on a personal level. It involves reaching beyond human-based solutions to something far more glorious. This is an open invitation to us all. Jesus' promise to all those who are willing to come face-to-face with Him, is that He will provide rest.

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### Questions for reflection

- What human-based solutions am I relying on to bring rest? Am I also intentionally seeking heaven-sourced refreshing?
- In what ways am I intentionally coming to Jesus? How much time I spend doing this might depend on how depleted and weary I am. Should I be spending more time being refreshed by Him in the Word, in worship, in prayer?
- Is there anything stopping me accepting Jesus' invitation and coming to Him right now?

## Day 2

“Take my yoke upon you...”



When was the last time you were in a 3-legged race with someone? Think about how close you had to be to that other person. You probably had your arms around each other. In fact, you were tied together. And if you weren't in sync as you ran, what happened? You fell flat on your face! You have to stay in step, don't you? It's similar when oxen are yoked together. They must learn to work together and submit to the directions they are given, or there will be chaos!

Jesus could have said, “Come and let's run together,” or “Come and be on my team,” or even “Come and be my disciple.” But He didn't. The analogy of the yoke is intentional. Remember, Jesus isn't actually offering respite and solitude to weary and burdened people. He isn't saying He will take us out of our circumstances. He is offering refreshing and refueling in the midst of what we are already doing.

Oxen are yoked together in order to work, not to rest. And that's an important point. Yet, instead of the usual partnerships in our everyday life, Jesus is offering a different kind of partnership. It's a yoke that is unlike anything we've experienced before. It comes from Jesus, and is therefore from the Kingdom of Heaven. It is firmly anchored in the heavenly realm, rather than the things of the earth. And that's what makes the difference.

Some background might help us grasp why Jesus uses the yoke analogy. The ancient Israelites pictured a yoke as though oxen

were experiencing a staff across their shoulders. The staff was important for two reasons:

- Firstly, the staff was used to lead, guide, discipline and care for sheep. This equally applied to oxen when they were yoked together. When we take up the yoke Jesus offers, we experience the leading, guiding, discipline and care of the Good Shepherd. We are fully embraced in His loving guidance and protective concern.
- Secondly, the staff was a symbol of power and authority. In offering us His yoke, Jesus not only asks us to be willing to submit to His authority, He also takes power and authority over any other thing that would seek to dominate or control our lives. As we submit to Him, He brings His mighty power and resources to bear on our behalf. How amazing!

However, just as in a 3-legged race, we really have to get “up close and personal” with Jesus, the One we are yoked to. As we take up His yoke it is as if He wraps His arms around our shoulders. It’s there we find rest. We are refreshed and refueled in His powerful embrace.

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### Questions for reflection

- Have I inadvertently made any partnerships or agreements that have caused me to be yoked to something or someone other than Jesus in any area of my life?
- Am I experiencing all that Jesus intended when He invited me to take up His yoke?
- Is there anything stopping me taking up, or easing further into, the yoke Jesus is offering me, right now?

## Day 3

“...and learn from me...”



From the day we are born, we begin to learn. Firstly, from our parents and those that surround us, then from the wider community, our environment, and the things we pursue in life. But Jesus has something else he wants to call our attention to. He is calling us to learn directly from Him.

Notice that the place of learning is in the yoke. We are in the place of intimate discovery when we have chosen to become closely tied with Jesus in submission to His yoke.

On a farm, an older, more experienced ox will often be yoked with a younger, or less experienced one. Through the yoke, the older ox will teach the less experienced ox, how to work. It's like on-the-job training for oxen. The young ox can no longer be independent or do their own thing. They cannot stop or go when they want, or even put their head up or down as they feel inclined. Everything they do is tied to what the older ox is doing.

That's why the yoke is the place of true discipleship. We become the learner (which is what the word “disciple” means). Jesus takes the lead and what He does in us is transformative. He redefines our direction, the speed we walk, where we focus, and what we pay attention to. Like the less experienced ox that is in the process of learning, everything we do must begin to mirror Jesus.

As upside-down as it may seem, it is as we submit to being enslaved to the yoke of Jesus - surrendering our will and yielding our independence - that we find freedom. His will becomes what we want too, and we start to view everything through His eyes.



We see people and objects we never realised were there. We begin to discern where to turn, when to push harder, and our reaction time to His commands shortens. We become more obedient to His lightest touch or smallest whisper.

We also find that Jesus' yoke has nothing to do with any earthly framework we've known before. There is no set of instructions we can study to learn what Jesus Himself wants to personally teach us. Rather, it's a relational journey with Jesus as He teaches us to embrace and reflect the character of heaven.

And that's what is so exciting about accepting Jesus' yoke and learning from Him. The power and resources of heaven show up where the character of heaven is expressed. And that's wherever we have learnt to trust and follow Him.

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#### Questions for reflection

- How often do I look for a plan to follow rather than pressing into my relationship with Jesus? What can I do to change this?
- Are there any areas where I am preferring to do my own thing rather than submit to learning from Jesus? Examining where I may not be expressing the character of heaven might help pinpoint these areas.
- What decisions do I need to make, or what posture can I take, to strengthen my embrace of Jesus and the character of heaven?

## Day 4

“...for I am gentle and humble in heart...”



The more time you spend with someone, the better you get to know them. The closer you are to them, the more you see of their heart and motives.

Being closely yoked to Jesus means two things. Firstly, we get to experience His heart, and secondly, we give Him access to more of ours.

There are two related aspects of Jesus' heart that are highlighted in this passage – gentleness and humility – and they are both particularly associated with taking up the yoke of Jesus and receiving His refreshing.

At first glance, gentleness and humility may not seem very remarkable. However, they are incredibly powerful. They are core attributes of God's kingdom and usher in His blessing.

Firstly, gentleness is founded on the goodness of God. It is anchored in complete trust in His control of everything. Gentleness is the exact opposite of human self-interest and self-assertiveness, because a gentle person is not occupied with themselves at all. They will fully embrace the yoke of Jesus and rely on Him, even when they don't understand.

Moses is a prime example of a gentle (or meek) person who was also an incredibly strong leader (Numbers 12:3). Moses experienced God's goodness and trusted in God's complete control in a way very few people ever do.

It's the yoke of Jesus that deals with self-assertiveness and self-interest in our lives. That's one of the key things we will learn from Jesus once we accept His invitation to intimate learning and discipleship.

Secondly, humility is a posture of lowliness, or not rising far from the ground. Humbling ourselves is a heart decision, and that decision is made under the yoke of Jesus. It's the choice Jesus made (Matthew 21:5), and it's the choice all those who get up close and personal with Him make too.

Gentleness and humility are also incredibly valued by God. So much so that they come with the promise of immense blessing (see Psalm 25:9; 37:11; Matthew 5:5; 1 Peter 5-6) as well as refreshing. We won't find these things if we look for them here on earth, but Jesus has an abundance of supply. After all, He **is** gentle and humble! And He offers all this to us.

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### Questions for reflection

- Do I fully grasp how vital gentleness and humility are in God's Kingdom? Where have I seen God's gentleness and humility modelled?
- Do I have any areas of self-assertiveness or self-interest that are competing against the yoke of Jesus? If so, what areas of my life am I not fully trusting God with?
- How much am I allowing myself to rest in the goodness of God? Where could I be more anchored in His goodness?

## Day 5

“...and you will find rest for your souls.”



Are you feeling weary? At present there seems to be a corporate exhaustion that is blanketing us, and many people are readily confessing how tired they feel. Fatigue is part of our atmosphere, and we cannot easily escape it.

What's interesting is that there is no weariness in the Kingdom of Heaven. So why are so many of us feeling so depleted? Perhaps God has allowed this, in order to push us into Him in a whole new way. Maybe we need to be weaned off our independence and reliance on human strategies for rest and refreshment. Could it be that He wants us to realise the depth of His refreshing that we will need, in order to hold us steady in the chaos of the world around us?

The good news is that Jesus' words are addressed to those who are weary and burdened. They are for you and me, right now.

The rest Jesus provides has a quality of wholeness that we cannot find anywhere apart from in Him. His rest involves the whole of our being and it invades the whole of our lives. In the days to come, we are going to need to know how to firmly stand in His kind of wholeness, and obtain the refuelling and refreshing that He provides.

In the Old Testament, God offered this same invitation to the nation of Judah. The prophet Jeremiah issued God's call to His people to actively search for His good path and make sure they followed it. Walking God's way secured the promise that God would give them rest. Yet they refused (Jeremiah 6:16).

Fast forward 600 years, and Jesus issues the same promise of rest and refreshing that God spoke through Jeremiah. Again, it is to people who are refusing to turn and repent (Matthew 11:20-21).

So Jesus turns to the weary and burdened, to people like you and me, and offers us this refreshing that comes from Heaven itself – and then He offers us even more. He invites us into intimate partnership with Himself in His yoke. He instils in us the character attributes of heaven. He surrounds us with His strength and power. He gifts us with the ability to see things from His perspective. He refuels us as we go about our daily lives.

He gives us all of who He is. All He asks is that we give all of who we are to Him in return.

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### Questions for reflection

- Have I been inadvertently agreeing with the current atmosphere of fatigue and weariness in my confession? How can I change this to something that is more reflective of God's Kingdom?
- What is the main thing God has been speaking to me about through this devotional journey? How can I best respond to Him today?

# Notes

## Notes

