

Rest For the Weary

Matthew 11:28-30

Lesson 7

Exploring Faith Bible Study Series

Lesson Purpose:

This lesson is designed to help people see their need for the rest Jesus gives. In a world where we are constantly bombarded with things to do, deadlines, stresses and the desire to “keep up,” we are desperately in need of rest. Not only will this lesson open the group’s eyes to their busyness, but also open their hearts to Jesus.

Icebreaker:

Invite the group to think for a moment about this question: What is the most refreshing vacation you have ever taken? Ask group members to share their responses.

Life Connections:

Use these questions to help your group members to begin to open up with one another and to think about their own lives. The answers to these questions need not be spiritual in nature. The intention is for practical real life responses.

- 1) What makes you tired? Work; my children; worrying about things; all of the bad things happening in the world.
- 2) How do you relax? Read a book; take a long bath; watch TV; go on vacation.
- 3) How are we taught to rest? By getting away; I learned watching my parents.
- 4) How are we taught to lead restless lives? By working overtime; by trying to get ahead; by being busy with kid’s sports, school, work and other activities.
- 5) Do you worry about things that take away your ability to rest? Yes, all the time, watching the news makes me worry; I can’t sleep at night because I think about work.
- 6) What kind of rest do you need? Physical rest? Rest from inner doubts and fears that rob you of rest? Physical rest, my body is so tired; Spiritual rest, my thoughts are always racing and I can’t settle down and hear myself think; rest from my worrying.

Scripture's Answers: Matthew 11:28-30

In this section the Life Connection questions are now related to the passage of Scripture being used in this Bible Study. The answers to the following questions should come from the text as well as out of the individual's hearing and understanding of what they have heard read.

Have a member of the group read the Scripture passage aloud for all to hear. Make sure extra Bibles are available so everyone can follow along.

Scripture:

"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."
(Matthew 11:28-30)

Introduction:

Jesus has just finished talking to His listeners about what His kingdom is like. He has told them they may have to leave their families to follow Him. He has pronounced "woe's" on those cities that do not believe or accept Him. Jesus is not offering us easy answers. However, when we come to the passage of Scripture for this study we find Jesus talking about light burdens and easy yokes. How can the two go together? What we find is that following Jesus is not about carrying a heavier burden than the one we already have. Living a life for Him makes the yoke easier.

- 7) Who is Jesus talking to in these verses? His followers; everyone.
- 8) Can you find a place where Jesus excludes anyone from this rest He is offering? No, it seems like it is for everyone.
- 9) How do we get this rest? By coming to Jesus; by following Him; by asking Him.
- 10) What Jesus says may seem too easy. He does ask for something in return, what does Jesus want us to do? To carry His yoke; to come to Him; to learn from Him.

Teaching Time:

Say to your group: "There are some important concepts Jesus is talking about in these verses. We all understand rest and what it means. What you might not understand is what a yoke is. Yokes are used to attach a team of oxen together to plow a field or pull a heavy load. What is important to understand about a yoke is it has to be balanced. The team of oxen must be the same size and strength so they can pull effectively. When one is weaker the yoke is too burdensome on the other and they are unable to function. A yoke will not work without two oxen in it—there must be a team."

- 11) Jesus talks about a yoke. In life we are all yoked to something; we do not live independently. What or who can people be yoked to? Their work; their family; their past; their spouse.

Teaching Time:

Say to your group: "Each of us carries a yoke. We all carry heavy yokes. The yoke of responsibility can be very heavy for us to carry. We are responsible to provide for our family, to do a good job at work, to please our parents. Or maybe we carry the yoke of our past—the things that were done to us, the things we did, the things we can't take back. We all carry some kind of a yoke, but no one can carry a yoke alone. Two oxen wear a yoke and pull the plow. If there were only one animal, the yoke would be unbalanced. The plow could not till the ground. Jesus wants us to put our neck in His yoke and He wants to walk through life with us."

- 12) What words does Jesus use to describe Himself? He says He is gentle; humble.
- 13) What do you think Jesus' yoke is? What do you think His burden is? To come to Him; to learn from His teachings; to follow Him.
- 14) Do you think this yoke or this burden would be heavier or lighter for you to bear than the one you are already carrying? Why? Heavier, I could never measure up to what He is asking; Lighter, I want to walk with Jesus as my companion instead of what I am already yoked to.

Teaching Time:

Say to your group: "Sometimes we assume that being a Christian would be much too difficult, that we could never measure up to what Jesus is asking us to do. The truth is, we can't follow Christ in our strength. When we try to live on our own, the Christian life becomes a very heavy burden. Thank goodness that isn't what Jesus is asking us to do. You see when we invite Jesus into our lives, when we let down the heavy burdens of this world and take His yoke upon our back, then we are surrounded by His grace. We can't do it alone, but Jesus doesn't ask us to. He always is there offering His presence, His strength and His help to live lives transformed by His grace."

Reflection:

Invite the group to take a moment to reflect silently on the questions you are going to ask. These questions can be answered or you may choose to allow the members of the group to think about them.

- 15) If you were to look honestly at your life are you satisfied with the amount of work you do and the amount of rest you have?
- 16) Let's take a moment to look at the burdens we carry. Some may be the burden to provide more and more for your family, the burden to succeed at work, the burden to look good to those around you, the

burden to achieve greater things in life. Do these burdens weigh you down, take away your rest and make your quality of life merely mediocre?

17) Two people are necessary to fill a yoke. With whom do you share a yoke?

Optional Activity Time:

As a way to make the reflection more meaningful in the lives of group members there are two activities to engage in. First, give the group time to write the answers to the reflection questions in a journal they can keep throughout the study time and the week to come. Second, send each group member home with these questions to think about and write about in a journal during the week. When the group gathers together the next time, break the group up into smaller groups and give them the opportunity to share what they have been thinking about since they last met.

Teaching Time:

Say to your group: "You may be happy with the way your life looks, you may be content with the amount of work you do and the amount of rest you have. But you may also wish you could slow down. You may want to take a deep breath and not feel guilty for taking a break. You may hope all of this work and toil will end.

"We could come to this passage and dismiss what it says because we know that Christians still have to work and still have busy lives. What Jesus is offering in these verses isn't a removal of the work in your life. Instead He offers us companionship as we live our lives, do our jobs and struggle with the burdens we carry. When we choose to share life with Jesus, the work we face is easier, the burden we carry is lighter and the yoke is not as hard. Why? Because Jesus offers us grace, mercy and peace where the world tries to take them from us. He truly gives us rest, real rest, meaningful rest. Come to Him, you will find rest for your souls."

Conclusion:

Take time to pray together before the group leaves. Allow group members to share insights and ask questions they may have.