

Wholeness

Weekly Biblical reflections for looking after our Wellbeing

Reflection: Living a Life of 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 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

'You can't do it all' – how many times have we heard that, yet at the same time thinking "but I am expected to"? In the life of teaching (and many other roles) there is always another job, always something else to do. Everyone is working hard and it can be exhausting, especially at this time in the term.

Relaxation and rest are key in supporting our own wellbeing and mental health. Inspirational speaker Mark Black states: *'Sometimes the most productive thing you can do is relax'*. It's so easy within hectic lifestyles, work pressure and deadlines to forget to relax. Yet just 5 minutes periodically stepping away can give us greater energy levels to tackle whatever lies before us and help us manage stress.

Jesus knew the importance of rest, and offers us a way to live in that rest, but what does the above verse actually mean? The key is the first three words – 'Come to me.' In life we so often try to do things by our own strength, but this is an open invite for us to come to him.

In John Mark Comer's book, *'The Elimination of Hurry'*, which discusses how to stay emotionally healthy and spiritually alive in the chaos of the modern world, he discusses what Jesus meant by 'yoke'.

'Yoke was a common idiom in the first century for a Rabbi's way of reading the Torah. But it was also more: it was his set of teachings on how to be human. His way to shoulder the weight of life – marriage, divorce, prayer, money, sex, conflict resolution, government – all of

it. It's an odd image for those of us who don't live in an agrarian society. But imagine two oxen yoked together to pull a cart or plow a field. A yoke is how to shoulder a load. What made Jesus unique wasn't that he had a yoke; all rabbis had a yoke. It was that he had an easy yoke.¹

He goes on to talk about the importance of Jesus' disciples, or as the Hebrew word can be translated, apprentices. To be an apprentice of Jesus was to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus, do what Jesus would do if he were you.

So how does this help us? How does it help us stay emotionally whole? Firstly, we need to come to Jesus. Throughout the New Testament we see many invitations to 'come follow me' which means to be his apprentice and learn from him. It's an invitation to take up his easy yolk, to navigate life's burdens and difficulties with him by your side – to shoulder the weight.

In The Message translation of the Bible these verses read:

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

An invitation to keep company with Jesus to live freely and lightly!

Question to reflect on:

- How do you build rest and relaxation into your day?
- Do you find relaxation productive?
- How do you feel about Jesus' invitation to 'Come to me'?
- What would be being an apprentice of Jesus mean?

Prayer

Father,

Thank you your Son has called us to be with him, thank you he wants to walk with us and share the burdens of life side by side. Help us to remember he is always there for us and wants to keep company with us so that we may rest and live freely and lightly. Amen

ⁱ Comer, J M. (2019) *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry, The Secret of an Easy Yoke*, Hodder and Stoughton p.76-77