

Matthew 11:28-30

Rest Rehab: ACT

The Summit Church

MPT: Jesus offers the opportunity to be yoked with him in a new way of living, one that finds rest from the business and burdens of this world.

MPS: Jesus gives a type of rest--spiritual and emotional--that nothing else in the world can offer.

INTRODUCTION

I became a follower of Jesus in February of 2008. The six months leading up to that were some of the most miserable months of my life. I was trying to have a **foot in both worlds**--one in church and one in the party scene--and it was just horrible.

During that six months where God was drawing me to himself there was a verse that kept popping up everywhere--Matthew 11:28 (NIV),
28“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

- There I was--tired, weary, burdened. Honestly, I was just *done*.
- But praise God my eyes were finally opened and I came to him.

Now, I wish I could tell you that ever since February 2008 my life has been nothing but **rainbows** and **sunshine**, but that'd be lying. In fact, **the very thing that led me to Jesus** is so often the very thing that **keeps me coming back to Jesus**: my battle against the **burdens** and **anxieties** of life coupled with the **weight** of responsibilities often take me from **free-worshiper** to **wearied-worrier**.

We live in a **world addicted** to technology. **Relationship skills** are dwindling. **Families** are splitting up. **Anxiety** has a seat at almost every table. **Kids** live in a fishbowl of comparison.

We live in a world that **bullies** any and everyone it deems fit to. We are battling **depression** and **anxiety** at historic rates. Look up any **survey or research on mental health** during COVID and every single **negative** thing has increased.

One author said it like this:“We...have taskmasters in our heads that chide and berate us if we sit down and rest. They beat us over the head with all the unfinished tasks in front of us, and blame us as lazy, good for nothing wimps if we even sneak away for a breath of fresh air. . .We could spend our whole lives neglecting Sabbath [rest], never realizing that this may be [the very reason] why our lives are weary and empty,...”¹

I think if I were to sum up all of the emotions in one word it'd be this:

TIRED.

- I'm not just talking about sleepy tired...that can be fixed with a bed; I'm talking about a **soul wearied, energy depleted, joy stealing** tired. This is a tired where you can **no longer relax**. A tired where you can **no longer able to be at home by yourself and just sit in your thoughts**. You have lost your peace.
- **How about you? You tired?**

Seems like every few years I come across a book that absolutely blows my mind... Not talking about PJD's new book. . . Of course the Bible *always* blows my mind . . . I'm talking about John Mark Comer's book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*.

In that book he cites **10 Signs You're Suffering From Hurry Sickness:**²
Rate yourself:

1. Irritability (on edge)
2. Hypersensitivity
3. Restlessness (when you do stop to rest, you can't relax)
4. Compulsive Overworking
5. Numbness

¹ Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*

² He's citing counselor Ruth Haley Barton for these 10 signs.

6. **Escapist Behaviors** (binge watching tv, excessive social media usage, excessive alcohol, excessive caffeine)
7. **Disconnected From Your Identity or Calling**
8. **Not Able to Attend to Basic Human Needs** (sleeping, exercising, eating)
9. **Hoarding Energy**
10. **Slippage in Spiritual Practices** (disciplines become less and less frequent)

How many of those do you have? I have at least 7/10. (We having fun yet?...I'm just here to pass on guilt and shame to all of you today.)

- You're like, "That's not me..." Okay, yeah, right. Tell me you don't **move from one checkout lane to another cuz it's shorter**. Tell me when you're **approaching a stoplight you don't count the cars** in front of you and change lanes if one is shorter.
- You know who you are! We all suffer from this, okay--it's a sickness. **That's why I'm preaching on it...**when I first got into ministry someone told me **if I preach from my weaknesses then I'll never run out of material.**

So here it is...here I am. I'm a pastor and I often live a hurried, anxiety-filled, weary, and burdened life. And left to my own devices I have reason only to despair. But Jesus... **It's no secret where I'm going today.**

- Yes, I'm **weary**...but Jesus...
- Yes, I'm **burdened**...but Jesus...

-----*PAUSE*-----

Listen, sometimes we can point to exactly what's causing our weariness, **but often we can't**. Most the time it's not one thing...it's a cumulative, multilayered intersection of **complexities, emotions, sin, suffering, and physical frailties**.

And in most cases **complex burdens** cannot be relieved by **simple solutions**...BUT JESUS. See what Jesus does here in Matthew 11 is

step in and speak a word that is so **simple**, so **hopeful**, and so **refreshing** that it almost seems too good to be true.

- (You've probably heard the 'ole, "If it's too good to be true, it probably is." Normally I'd agree...but when Jesus is involved the saying should be "If it sounds too good to be true, I promise you it's **even better**.")

Let's read this refreshing word together. I want you to drink it in like a glass of ice water on a hot day. In fact, I'll read it but **I want you to read the words that are underlined**:

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

²⁸"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

In case that slipped by anyone, I'm gonna read in a different translation this time and I just want you to let this wash over you.

Listen to this (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG):

"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."

Church, we're all gathered together--whether in person, in homes, or even digitally--your brothers and sisters in Christ are all here, and I've invited a doctor to this meeting and his name is Jesus. You **walked in** or **tuned in** w/o knowing what you were walking into, because **we're about to have an intervention**, alright?

- Using Matthew 11 we're gonna go through a few stages of what I'd like to call "**Rest Rehab:ACT**"

- And I'm gonna be super baptist and give you an acronym to remind of how to *proactively rest*: **ACT**.
 - Admit we're tired. Come to Jesus. Take his yoke.

Now don't be scared cuz we're all gonna go through it together, and I'm gonna make it real easy. In fact, let's go ahead and **get step one out of the way**--It's the 'A' in our ACT.

Step One: Admit "I'm Tired."

Let's say it together: "*I'm tired.*"

- If you're online you can type it.
- If you're next to someone tell them.
- If you're by yourself you can write it in your journal.
 - The goal is to just get it out there.
- Let's say it again—"I'm tired."

Boom. You did it. Step one complete. Well done.

- Doesn't it feel good to know **so many other ppl** are as **stressed** and **wearied** and **burdened** as you? (*See, we're all jacked up. Too many of y'all are excited about how many ppl are struggling right now. Y'all need Jesus.*)

Step One is 'A'--Admit you're tired. So now that **you know this message is for you** we can move to step two.

Step Two: Come to Jesus

Look at v28: **28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**

Now **context is very important** here. (In fact, one of my jobs as a Bible teacher is to help you learn how to read the Bible for

yourself...and one of the most basic principles you should know when reading the Bible is that **context is king**.)

So what's Jesus' context here? Who is he speaking to?

- In Matthew 11 he's speaking to a group of **weary, worn-out** people who have spent their lives running on what Pastor Bryan calls **the treadmill of religion**.
- It's a group of people who were carrying 'the yoke of the Torah'--the heavy burden of the Jewish law with all its 600+ commandments that you must follow in order to be approved of by God.

See, **distance** and **separation** were marks of the OT.

- In **Exodus**, God tells Moses to not come near him cuz he'll die.³
- In **Numbers**, anyone who is impure is to be sent them outside of the camp.⁴
- In **Leviticus**, only spotless priests could enter the inner court of the tabernacle and temple and approach the presence of the Lord.⁵

This is what Jesus's audience is used to hearing...they were used to hearing the Jewish law speak harshly saying, "**Go! Pay close attention to your steps lest you break one single commandment and perish!**"

The problem with this **works-based approach** toward God is that **you never know when it's enough**...it's flat out tiring and wearisome!

- *When have you **done** enough?*
- *How many **church services** a month does it take?*
- *What's the **dollar amount** you are supposed to give?*
- *How often should you be **sharing your faith**?*

³ Exodus 3:5

⁴ Numbers 5:1-4

⁵ Leviticus 6:10; Leviticus 8:7; Ezekiel 44:17-18; Exodus 28:39-43

- How long should you be having **quiet time** each morning?
- Am I **praying** enough? **Sharing** enough? **Giving** enough? **Living good** enough?

In **Matthew 23:4 (ESV)** Jesus talks about these ppl by saying, “**They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders ...**”

In **Acts 15:10** Peter is speaking to a crowd with the same problem and he says, “¹⁰**Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?**”

But then along comes this Jewish man named Jesus who bids you “come.” **Not ‘do’ or ‘learn’ or ‘take’...just come.**

‘Come’ is a **present tense imperative**; it’s a **command to come NOW**. Not tomorrow or next year or when you get your life together.

- Jesus isn’t just inviting; he’s lovingly *commanding* us to step off the treadmill of morality and to rest in him!⁶
- Leave your **labors**, self-reliant **efforts**, **sins**, **presumptions**, everything you have trusted in, and just come to Jesus.

There’s nothing for you to *do* other than simply *come*. God’s rest is a gift, not a transaction. We can’t earn it, we just receive it.

Illustration: Ron Swanson (Man’s man. Loves camping, woodworking, steak, and scotch. Man’s man. Think John Muller with khakis and a polo.)

- **Ron**: “*I just stood there, quietly breathing. **There were no thoughts in my head whatsoever. My mind was blank.***”
- **Chris**: It takes a ton of work for me to get to that kind of headspace!
- To which **Ron** replies: “**Don’t try so hard.**”

⁶Helpful thoughts from Bryan Loritts book *Saving the Saved*.

This, Church, is **the beauty of Jesus’s invitation**. **DON’T TRY SO HARD!** Just come! “Come” does not impose any hard conditions. Not “do this and then come.” Just “come.”

And who can come? Look at the text: ²⁸“**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**” (Matthew 11:28 NIV)

“**All you who ARE weary and burdened...**” indicates a condition that already exists. Jesus doesn’t invite those who feel **righteous** and **worthy**. He invites those who are **weary** and **burdened**.

You know, I think there’s a reason Jesus doesn’t give these burdens any special name. It could be a burden from the **law**, from **religion**, a burden with **sin**, or **anxiety**, or an **affliction**--he doesn’t say, “*Come if you have this **specific problem** or that **particular difficulty**.*” but simply says “*Come ALL!*”

- **Tired? Weighed down? Burdened? Have sin in your life? Feeling ashamed? Guilty? Anxious? Stressed? Overwhelmed? Feel like you can never measure up?**
- If this is you, Jesus is talking to you. He’s inviting you. Come to Jesus...he will give you rest.

The obvious question is **have you come to Jesus?**

- I told you at the beginning of our “rest rehab” that you weren’t gonna have to go through it alone. And that includes right here. See, I’d actually argue that **we ALL need to come to him today**...perhaps for different things, but we all need to come to him.

Some of you need to come to him as Redeemer. You need salvation.

- You need to come to full realization that you are a sinner in need of a savior. That desperation is a part of true salvation.

That as long as you have confidence in yourself and your own abilities, you will never please God. To repent and place your faith in Jesus as redeemer is to make a 180* turn from the burden of your old life and enter into the restfulness of the new. **Come to Jesus...he'll give you eternal rest.**

Others need to come to him for rest.

- This is those of you who claim Jesus as Savior but are just **burnt out**. You're **tired**. You're **weary**.
- Come to Jesus today...AGAIN. Lean back into Jesus and rest in *his* finished work. The work that gives joy, peace, and rest for your soul.

Don't **go somewhere else**. Don't look to **other ppl** for relief. Don't **wait for help** to come. Just as you are, this very day, come to Jesus.

Admt. Come. Then (last step--LSBS)...

Step Three: Take His Yoke and Rest

Look at all three verses again:

²⁸"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

In the book I mentioned earlier, *Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, the author points out that Jesus's imagery of an "easy yoke" is a bit odd...especially given how far removed we are from an agrarian economy. So we forget that **a yoke is a tool for work (if you're a kid listening, I'm not talking about the inside of an egg)**...a yoke was used to link oxen together--like a collar--and then the yoke was attached to another object, such as a plow.

Don't you find that strange? Jesus just got done offering us rest, but now he's offering a yoke? A yoke wasn't created for **rest**; it was created for **work**. Isn't that the **last thing** a burned-out worker needs?

- **I don't want a yoke, I want a vacation!** I want the concierge to *take my yoke* and escort me poolside at an all-inclusive resort. That's what I want. I don't want a **tool**; I want **time off**.
- We'd expect Jesus to say something more like, "*Hey, take off that yoke that's weighing you down. Doesn't that feel great? Now run and be free!*"

But, see, Jesus here knows something we don't: Jesus understands that **life is an unending series of burdens**. Jesus knows there's no way around the **weight of responsibility** that is life this side of resurrection.

- So instead of giving us a temporary escape from our weight, **Jesus offers a new way to carry it**. That's what Jesus offers in taking up his yoke. He offers *his* strength...*his* wisdom...*his* joy...*his* ease in facing all of life's burdens. And because we know we're linked with Jesus we can **rest**.

Augustine compared Christ's yoke to a **bird's feathers**...on one hand the bird could complain about the added weight of its wings. But on the other hand, it's the bird's wings which enables it to soar through the sky. **Sails** may add weight to a ship, but it's how the ship itself comes to sail.⁷ That's what it's like to take up Jesus' yoke.

Do life's problems go away? Absolutely not...it's not that the burdens of the world go away, but now you have a new way--a new strength--to carry them because you are linked with Jesus in carrying the burdens of the world.

⁷ Reeves, *Rejoicing in Christ*, 21-22.

Jesus is not offering an escape from life, but rather a new way to go through it. A new way to bear responsibility. Not release from pressures, but new **resources** and **strength** for the pressures. And instead of being **tired, burnt out, weary, and burdened**...now you can **rest**. Because you're yoked with Jesus and you're living life at *his* pace and with *his* strength.

This is where it gets good, because now we can stop seeking rest as a means to an end, because we've been yoked with Jesus who *is* our rest. Jesus is the **means** and Jesus is the **end**. He *is* our very great reward of the gospel.⁸

And when we walk at his pace--the pace of grace--we find *rest* not *burdens*. **1 John 5:3**, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*"

Jesus tells us to do three things here to get rest: come. take. learn. Because he knows as you **come** to Jesus, as you **take** his yoke, and as you **learn** more about him you'll then want to **come** to him more, which means you'll **take** more of him, thus leading you to **learn** more about him. It's a CYCLE OF REST that's found only when you find Jesus. You can't have true rest apart from Jesus.

Because you believe, by faith, that Jesus *is* your rest, you can now make a plan *to* rest. You can take hold of what's already been given you in Christ.

I think **most of you believe** what I'm saying here--that you need rest--but **you still fail to rest**. Why? **Cuz we don't practice it**. I'm convinced that at least half of our failure to Sabbath is simply lacking **rhythms** and **habits** that allow for it.

- Real talk: I'm not great at this. This has been one of the most convicting sermons I've ever preached.

- We love the busy parts of Christianity--serving neighbor, being active in church, being busy with spiritual disciplines and Bible checklists--we skip the other part (rest) which is actually crucial to accomplishing the rest of it.
- Resting is SO HARD for me...my wife will be the first to tell you how little I rest.

Ironically, it takes a lot of **preparation** and **discipline** for me to **leave work undone and rest...to turn my phone off...to pause my inbox...to let laundry pile up** for one more day.

It takes discipline for me just to engage in activities—going for a **walk**, reading a **book**, playing **games with my kids**—activities that have literally NO impact on my bank account or the GDP.

- This kind of life, let me go ahead and tell you, is **completely out of step with 21st-century American culture**. But it's what it means to walk with Jesus' yoke, not our own.
- Hear this clearly: **Rest is not laziness, it's medicine**.
 - Rest reminds us that **God is the point of our lives**; not work. That **God is the provider for our lives**, regardless of how much money our jobs bring in.

So how can we rest? Let's get super practical here. Rick Warren has probably *the* most practical plan for rest I've ever seen. It's real simple:

1. **Divert Daily**
 - **Whatever relaxes you**. Reading a book. Working out. Going for a walk. Journaling. Watching a show.
2. **Withdraw Weekly**
 - **Sabbath**. Once a week put your phone away. Don't work. Be present with the people who are actually in front of you.
3. **Abandon Annually**

⁸ Reeves, *Rejoicing in Christ*, 21-22 // Gen. 15:1

- **Disconnect completely.** Vacation. Staycation. Get off the grid for a week. Something about taking a week off that makes you realize everything you're stressing about really isn't that big of a deal.

CONCLUSION (VAMP)

Unrest, anxiety, and stress might be the most descriptive characteristics of our society today.

- But there is hope: there is an **ark of refuge** for the weary. In Christ we find rest of **conscience**...rest of **heart**...rest built on the **pardon of all sin**...rest flowing from **peace with God**.

As a little kid I used to get scared sometimes at night. We lived in this little ranch style home where my parents would sometimes let me make a little pallet on the floor and lay down with my head peeking out into the hallway where I could see just enough of them in the living room to put my little 7 year old mind at rest. I don't know why I remember this so vividly, but I do.

It was hard for me to be in my room at that age cuz of fear of the **unknown**...the **stress of the dark**...the **burdens of being lonely**...maybe it was questioning why the **White Power Ranger** had to be a bad guy, or why **Zack and Kelly** just couldn't stay together, or perhaps I was reeling from a nightmare cuz I disobeyed my mom and watched **Are You Afraid of the Dark?** (where my 90s kids at?) Anyways...eventually I would doze off. I'd just pass out. And here's the strange part: every single time I would wake up in the morning in my own bed. I'd look under the covers and be in my pajamas. I'd look around going, *"This is crazy."*

- And I'd ask the question, *"How did I get here?"*

Listen, I'll tell you got there: when you didn't have enough **strength**, when you were **tired** and **burdened** and **fell asleep**... while you were sleeping and resting, **DAD found you** and **picked you up** in his arms and took you where you needed to be.⁹

Some of you right now are so **restless** and **anxious** and **worried** and **stressed**--*God, I gotta do this. And, God, I gotta do that*--and what he wants you to do is just **COME and REST**.

And while you **trust** and **rest**, there is one who neither slumbers nor sleeps. HE will be the **faithful** one...HE will be the **righteous** one...HE will be the **holy** one. He's **all-sufficient**. He's **all-powerful**. He's **all-knowing**. He's the **beginning** and **end** and **everything in between**.

HE'S the one who bore the ultimate yoke as he carried his own cross up the hill to Calvary where he would prove his love for you on the cross. And now, according to John 6:37, "All who **come to me** I will certainly not cast out."

On the cross, Jesus bore the unrest that you might have eternal rest.

Your dad--your Heavenly Father--stands ready to carry you today. Would you come to him today?

Admit you're tired // **Come** to Jesus // **Take** his yoke and find rest.

PRAY

⁹ While this story is entirely true, I owe it's creativity to Judah Smith's sermon [Matters of the Meantime](#) preached at the Newspring Leadership Conference on Sept. 22, 2010.