



Week Three Study Guide – September 27
The Jesus Way: Apprenticeship
Matthew 11:28-30

Opening Question:

- Share something you have learned to do - a sport, a musical instrument, some other skill, etc. Who taught you and what was that experience like?

Read aloud this introduction:

The dictionary definition of an apprentice is “someone learning how to do a specialized job through on-the-job training, under the guidance of an experienced colleague” or “someone who provides help to a skilled worker in order to learn the trade himself.”

In Jesus’ day, the rabbi/disciple relationship was one of master to apprentice. Village boys learned about God through their local synagogues. By the time they reached adulthood at age thirteen, formal education in the Law of God was over for most. They would leave the synagogue school and join their family in their work. Some students could take another step. Aware of various rabbis, a student could apply to be a disciple of a particular rabbi. If the rabbi accepted him as a disciple, he would enter into an apprenticeship that lasted about three years.

Applying for and being accepted as a rabbi's disciple or apprentice carried with it two requirements. First, when his rabbi gave an interpretation of God’s Law, the disciple was bound to accept it as the final word on the matter. Second, every disciple of a particular rabbi was to observe how the rabbi lived and emulate him in every way. So, what the rabbi said and what they did was authoritative. Just like a carpenter's apprentice in our day is expected to accept every instruction from the master carpenter and emulate every move the master carpenter makes, so, too, a disciple was to precisely follow the lead of his rabbi.

Invite someone in the group to read Matthew 11:28-30 aloud.

Pray this prayer (one person or the whole group together):

Lord, as we come together to study your Word, we bring all of who we are with our needs, our hopes, and our expectations. Meet us here in the power and presence of your Holy Spirit. Give us insight and understanding as we listen carefully for your voice.

And then give us courage and conviction to align our lives with the way of Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.

Read Aloud Some Important Notes on Being Under “The Yoke”:

In the First Century this rabbi/disciple life was referred to as being under “the yoke.” The accepted imagery was a burdened ox in the field, chafing in the yoke, trudging ahead with each step straining to make headway to perfect every precise nuance of the rabbi’s teaching and life. From writings a century or two later we find this description of this apprenticeship: “This is the way of the Torah: eat bread with salt, drink water by measure, sleep on the ground, a life of sorrow, and labor (studying) the Torah.” The Word of God itself was referred to as “the yoke,” a burdensome weight to bear as one sought to adhere to every minute nuance without fail.



Now Read Aloud this translation from Dale Bruner:

“Come here to me, all you who are struggling and carrying too much, and I will refresh you. Here, take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and simple at heart, and you will experience refreshing deep down in your souls. You see, my yoke is easy to wear and my burden is light to carry.”

Questions for Exploration:

- What stands out to you in this new understanding of the yoke Jesus offers?
- How is the yoke Jesus offers different from the yoke traditionally offered a disciple?
- What yokes do Christians struggle with? What burdens might we carry that are “too much”?
- How would you describe the refreshment/rest that Jesus offers?
- Why is Jesus’ yoke “easy” and “light”?

Questions for Pressing it Out:

- What do these words of Jesus reveal about who God is?
- What do they reveal about God's priorities?
- What do they tell us about who we are?
- How does Jesus' teaching inform us about our own priorities in living out the way of Jesus?
- What does God want us to do?

Closing Prayer: Closing Prayer:

Depending on the needs/desires of your group here are some options:

- Ask one or two group members to close the group in prayer
- Pray the Lord's prayer together aloud:

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."