

The Easy Yoke
Matthew 11:25-30

Sunday, May 16, 2021 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Introduction:

A former Marine started a new career as a teacher. Just before the school year started, he injured his back. He was required to wear a plaster cast around the upper part of his body. Fortunately, the cast fit under his shirt and wasn't noticeable. On the first day of class, he found himself assigned to the most challenging students in the school. The students, having already heard the new teacher was a former Marine, were leery of him and he knew they would be testing his discipline in the classroom. Walking confidently into the rowdy classroom, the new teacher opened the window wide and sat down at his desk. When a strong breeze made his tie flap, he picked up a stapler and stapled the tie to his chest. There was dead silence...the rest of the year went quite smoothly.*

Yoke as discipline

The cast gave the new teacher an aura of toughness, but his discipline as Marine prepared him to succeed. We tend to admire discipline but not the constraints required to reach it. A yoke, a symbol of discipline that leaders laid upon their followers or a rabbi would upon his pupils, is something that we might tend to dislike. It constricts our freedom and limits our options. But in the Bible true freedom is freedom to serve Christ, not freedom to do whatever we want. Jesus promises, however, that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Let's take a look at that.

Describe a heavy yoke.

Some of the sages in the days of Jesus were notorious for placing rules upon rules to make sure that a person did not violate Scripture. They, the religious leaders, did not worry about them, but it caused sincere people to suffer when they attempted to serve God. Jesus criticized them for that. In Matthew 23:4 we find Him saying, "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

Describe an easy yoke

Jesus describes His yoke as easy, but it is not a simple a that.

This is a quote from Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament where he wrote that "easy" is "not a satisfactory rendering. Christ's yoke is not *easy* in the ordinary sense of that word. The word means originally, *good, serviceable...* In Luke 5:39, it is used of old wine, where the true reading, instead of *better*, is *good*, mellowed with age. Plato ("Republic," 424) applies the word to education. "*Good* nurture and education implant *good* constitutions; and these *good* constitutions improve more and more;" thus evidently using and as synonymous. The three meanings combine in the word, though it is impossible to find an English word which combines them all. Christ's yoke is *wholesome, serviceable, kindly*. "Christ's yoke is like feathers to a bird; not loads, but helps to motion" (Jeremy Taylor)." So Christ's yoke is not easy in that it is really light, but rather that it works and works well. It fits. It is profitable.

Application

The yoke of Jesus, I believe, is Matthew 5-7. If you want an overview of how a Christian is to behave, review that sermon. Know that you will fail in your endeavor, and others will as well. Be quick to repent, careful to assume that you are beyond failure and quick to forgive others as well. You should find that it works and works well. Someone living under Christ's yoke is like a river that stays within its boundaries. That river is powerful and serviceable. Ships and carry goods upon it and electricity can be produced from it. A river that rises over its boundaries become a flood, which is not serviceable but still powerful, but in a destructive manner. We want to be like the river.

Conclusion

Jesus described his yoke as easy, which is a little misleading because we don't have an equivalent word in English. His yoke is kind, serviceable and good. We follow His instructions as best we can, being quick to repent and quick to forgive and this yoke serves to make our lives like a river that stays inside of its banks, being both powerful and serviceable.

* <https://upjoke.com/discipline-jokes>