

REST WITHIN WORK

Matthew 11:28-30

For several years Sandy worked temporary secretarial jobs in business offices. As a writer, she was irritated that she spent her days typing other people's bad writing. She had no status to suggest rewording or to offer to rewrite anything. The work felt pointless, except for the hourly pay, which was not stellar. Sometimes she found ways to minister to her work colleagues, who often talked freely with her because they knew she would be gone in a week or so. On the whole, however, she found her temp jobs draining rather than satisfying.

Work is, well, *work*. When Jesus invites the work-weary to come to him and rest, we doubt if he means we should all go on permanent vacation. Then we should explore what he does mean by "rest."

Group Discussion. How do you feel about work (whatever form "work" takes for you)?

Personal Reflection. When have you experienced work as refreshing and restorative?

Severe warnings and profound reassurances are the immediate context of Jesus' welcoming words here. He has denounced "the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent" (Matthew 11:20). Then "at that time" he praises his Father for revealing his wisdom to "little children" and for the intimacy he enjoys with his Father (Matthew 11:25-27). After he declares his exclusive relationship with the Father, he invites the weary and burdened to come to him. Later there will be an encounter with the Pharisees over rigid application of the Sabbath law (Matthew 12:1-8). *Read Matthew 11:28-30.*

1. In this brief passage, what does Christ offer?

2. What part does Christ play, and what part do the "weary and burdened" play?

3. Think of some inadequate ways people try to find rest. Why are those attempts unsatisfying?

4. In what ways do you feel (or have you felt) "weary and burdened"?

5. When Jesus promises rest, we can assume he does not mean, abandon all your responsibilities, ditch your commitments, and live on the beach. Then how can a follower of Christ receive rest in the midst of diligent activity?

6. Taking the "yoke" of Jesus (v. 29) seems to contradict accepting rest from him. How might those two ideas be reconciled?

7. Along with the call to take on his yoke, Jesus calls his followers to "learn" from him (v. 29). Why is learning from him a necessary part of taking on his yoke?

8. How can being "gentle and humble in heart" (v. 29) be characteristics of strength?

9. Think of various forms that the "yoke" of Jesus has taken in your life. In what senses have you found Christ's yoke "easy" and his burden "light" (v. 30)?

10. How can a Christian believer discern the difference between doing good works through self-effort or for the wrong reasons, and doing good works out of trust and love for Christ?

11. In what areas do you feel the strain or even exhaustion of self-effort, even in what you know are good and worthwhile involvements?

12. Christ promises that he is sufficient to provide rest for our souls even in the midst of work. What are some practical ways you can "come" to him in the midst of your work and accept his rest?

13. How will you put those ways into practice this coming week?



Pray that you will not overlook the opportunities the Lord gives you for both physical and spiritual rest.

NOW OR LATER

Hebrews 4:10 declares that those who enter God's rest are able to rest from their own works. Study Hebrews 4:1-11 concerning the promise of entering God's rest.