

EXTRA! from the Creek

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This week we're passing along to you
a page from a

Pilgrim's Journal

A Tailor-Made Yoke

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I've been told that it's easy, but it's not. It's never easy, nor should it be. All my life the emphasis of the familiar verse spoken by Jesus (and sung in the hymn) has been on the word "easy." The verse itself is the highest pitch of the last three verses of Matthew 11, which are among the most soothing and inspiring of all Scripture: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

There's a believable legend concerning the quiet years of Jesus, the years prior to His more public ministry. The legend claims that Jesus the carpenter was one of the master yoke makers in the Nazareth area. People came from miles around for a yoke, hand carved and crafted by Jesus, son of Joseph. When customers arrived with their team of oxen, Jesus would spend considerable time measuring the team, their height, the width, the space between them, and the size of their shoulders. Within a week, the team would be brought back and He would carefully place the newly made yoke over the shoulders, watching for rough places, smoothing out the edges, and fitting them perfectly to this particular team of oxen.

From the Matthew 11 passage, it's critical to know just what the yoke itself is. From the context, it's clear that the yoke is Jesus' teaching – or in other words, His principles for living. But living as His disciple – following His principles – is not, frankly speaking, all that easy. Still, living them out is tailor-made for you; living them out is well fitting for you. But living them out is also, for a good part of the time, a burden – albeit a burden that He bears alongside us. For running

throughout Scripture is the theme that yours is a burden bearing Christ. He's not just a Lord whom you burden – and you do – but a Lord who actually solicits your burdens.

But you must never forget that that the same yoke that brings into your life burdens also brings into your life happiness. Make a habit of taking the easy way out and you'll never accomplish anything of significance – nor will you ever attain any real measure of happiness. It's true what the American science fiction author Harry Harrison has written: "The principles we live by, in business and in social life, are the most important part of happiness. We need to be careful, upon achieving happiness, not to lose the virtues which have produced it."

So that's the yoke I believe Jesus invites you to take. Just don't be misled by the word "easy," for its root word in Greek (*chrestos*) speaks directly of a tailor-made yoke, a yoke that is sure to be well fitting. The yoke Jesus invites you to take, the yoke that brings rest to your weary soul, is the one that's made exactly to your life and heart. The yoke He invites you to wear fits you well; it doesn't rub you or cause you to develop sore spiritual spots. And, by the way, it's designed for two. Jesus' yokes are always designed for two. And your yoke-partner is Christ Himself.

Sources

Bits & Pieces (June 2008)

Brett Blair. "The Burden Bearing Christ" (July 6, 2008)

The King James Study Bible (Nelson)

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