

Talk It Over

Stay Positive
Come to Me

SMALL TALK

1. What city would you most like to visit and why? What city would you least like to visit and why?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Matthew 11:20-24.** Why was Jesus denouncing the cities in which He performed most of His miracles? Are there varying degrees of judgment to be expected? If so, on what basis?
3. **READ Matthew 11:28-30.** What kind of people need this invitation? What promises did Jesus make? Is total discipleship easy or hard? What does Jesus mean by his burden is easy and light?

GETTING PERSONAL

4. How do you think God views our country's evil bent—especially in light of all the ways He has blessed us? What would Jesus say if he came and preached today in our city?
5. In what way(s) do you feel burdened and weary right now?
6. What are three things you could do this week to be a brighter light for Jesus in your city or town?
7. Have you ever experienced the "rest" Jesus promised?

MAKING PROGRESS

8. One of our core statements is: "Followers say, 'Follow me.'" How does this statement relate to Jesus' invitation to "take my yoke upon you?"

STAY POSITIVE

Come To Me

Thank you for joining us today, whether you are watching this at home, or from somewhere else, perhaps from a gathered group together somewhere. Thank you for joining us for Stay Positive.

There is no doubt in my mind that what we have been going through is a challenge. There is so much bad news coming our direction. How do we navigate this? I have an important question for you to consider today.

QUESTION

When things go out of your control and you are struggling, what do you do to cope?

Have you noticed that more people are out and about walking, jogging, running, riding bikes, or hiking these days? I have, just in my own neighborhood. More people are getting out. Why? People are trying to cope. **But is it enough?**

Have you noticed yourself rummaging around for some food even when you are not hungry? I have. Now food is a good thing. Comfort food is a good thing. It temporarily makes us feel better. **But is it enough?**

There are many good things we go to in order to cope. **But is it enough?**

I want to show you a very surprising example of going to a gift from God without going to the giver, God himself.

John 5:39-40 (NIV2011) {39} You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal

life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, {40} yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

This is like the ultimate example of how you can go to something good, something directly from God, that without one very important ingredient is not going to be enough!

It is possible to come to the Bible and not come to Jesus.

It is possible to pray and not come to Jesus.

It is possible to say, “Lord, Lord” and not come to Jesus.

It is possible to go to church and not come to Jesus.

So, let’s make sure we come to Jesus, or it is not going to be enough.

What we need most is to Come to Jesus.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV2011) {28} “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. {29} Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. {30} For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Even in this passage, these comforting words come immediately after some very uncomfortable words from Jesus by contrast.

Matthew 11:21 (NIV) “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

I. WOE to you when you don’t COME to me

The point here is to those who have received much from God and refuse to acknowledge God there is a greater judgment than to those who received very little. In other words, if we have witnessed God’s miracles, experience his gifts, and refuse to

acknowledge him, or we have been given God's word, and refuse to allow it to be planted, sprout, and grow, woe to us.

In print, just reading this, it is hard to know for sure what tone of voice Jesus used here. Was it an angry tone of voice, with an angry face? I don't think so. I believe it was sadness. Jesus is sad when he comes to anyone to invite them and they refuse to come to him. And yet, I don't think this "Woe to you" is the last word because of what he says a few sentences later. What comes next is the invitation to "come to me".

This is good news. Haven't we all experienced the "Woe to you" at some point. Any time we refuse to come to God, any time we refuse to humble ourselves before God, or submit to God we experience some "Woe to you". Its sad! When we refuse to bend, or bow toward God in submission we all have experienced sad consequences.

The sad "Woe to you" can be as final as on judgment day, but for right now it doesn't have to be because the door is open right now, for Jesus invitation, even to those who have not yet repented, to hear Jesus say, "come to me."

In a few This is a warning to us not the last word to us. There will be a last word, "Woe to you" on judgment day, but at this point an invitation is still open and is what is coming next. Are you currently experiencing a "woe to you"? It is not irreversible at this point. The last word comes later. What comes next is the invitation. Come to me.

Just two chapters earlier, he came to Matthew, who was in his own sinful and rebellious sin, betraying himself, his God, and his heritage by extorting taxes for his own gain. He was a tax collector for Rome even though he was Jewish. And in Matthew 9:9, Jesus invites. He didn't use his "woe to you" angry tone,

which will one day be final, but he used his invitational tone. He saw in Matthew a different grace filled future of hope and simply said, *“Follow me.”* And Matthew does and this changed that trajectory of his life. He writes the Gospel of Matthew. We we are studying it today.

This is good news. We can repent from our anger, our judgment, our hard heartedness toward religion, God, our heritage when we receive this loving invitation. “Come to me,” Jesus says, to you and me. It is a powerful invitation to leave all the stuff behind that keeps us from God, and respond in a life changing moment today.

II. **Come to me when you are BURDENED**

Matthew 11:28 (NIV2011) {28} “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

We can't hear the tone in Jesus voice here when we read it either. Was it a frustrated tone? Was it harsh? You can tell that I believe it was a kind invitation, gently spoken, with only the promise of goodness in it. Can you see the light in his eyes, his hope for you? Can you feel his acceptance and smile in his invitation. Don't think its not there. You may be angry at God, but he loves you, and invites you. “Come to me.” Please do.

Feeling stressed? Feeling burdened?

“All who are weary and burdened.” This is who he is addressing. Doesn't that sound like you right now? I know it sounds like he is addressing me. I'm weary. I'm burdened. I feel the weight of all the bad news and negativity. I bet you do to. He is inviting us to something better. But we have to choose.

We can do better than merely coming to his gifts, we can come to him. He will give you rest and restore us and refresh our souls.

III. Take MY YOKE and learn from me

Matthew 11:29 (NIV2011) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. {30} For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

This is an interesting choice of words, “take my yoke,” most of us in our culture never say anything like this. But this was a common way of saying something they understood in that day in a Jewish context. It means this. I invite you to choose to be my disciple. I know that sounds like a big leap, but let me explain. Rabbi’s used this way of describing apprenticeship. They were saying bind yourself to me and walk with me in every way. The label itself, “yoke” refers to the wooden harness contraption yoking a pair of oxen together.

Jesus was very familiar with these contraptions called “yokes” by the way, because he was a carpenter by trade. He used to customize a yoke to fit the pair of oxen precisely. He could make a yoke that could transfer the weight of the load between a larger stronger ox with a smaller weaker ox. The pair of oxen then walk together sharing the load, even though one is pulling more weight proportionally than the another. The yoke distributes the weight between the pair. Think of a dad pushing a car with the help of his little boy. They are both pushing together, but the larger share is being pushed by the dad. That is how Jesus the son, lived with

Jesus was saying, I invite you to pair yourself with me, and he saw deeper meaning than the typical Rabbi. In fact he claimed that his yoke was easy. Most Rabbis would talk about how hard their programs would be, and they challenged only the strong and the best. But Jesus offered something better. And by contrast he said, his yoke was easy. Why is that?

Jesus is a different kind of Rabbi. He wasn't just teaching commandments and principles. He came to take your load, share your load, and literally make it easy for you.

That doesn't mean there is no work involved in being a disciple of Jesus. There are teachings where it is obviously going to be difficult and costly, but it is still easy in this sense. Jesus while paired with you pulls most of the weight.

He is going to show us what pairing with him looks like. He is going to show us the disciplines of the disciple that are necessary to learn how this is done. Just as he applied disciplines in his own life to say and do only what the father was doing, we must learn these disciplines also. The father through the Spirit pulled the supernatural load for Jesus who functioned as a man showing us how it is done.

Do you want to know what is NOT EASY. The unyoked life. Do you want to know what is the most difficult and most frustrating life? That is someone who believes in God in their head, but they are completely unyoked, they are not walking with Jesus. That is the most difficult and frustrating life ever. If you are unyoked you feel guilt, and shame, and powerlessness, and it feels like nothing works. You are burdened. Let that burden go. Listen to Jesus. It is time to repent, and become fully yoked with Jesus, walking with him. Nothing held back. Walking step for step. Only then is it easy. If you hold back, and call your own shots, you are unyoked! It is burdensome and hard. You might be reading the bible, but you are not coming to Jesus. That is a terrible place to be. Jesus says, woe to you. Repent. Come to me. There is a better way!

IV. He pulls the WEIGHT when you COOPERATE.

The disciplines Jesus taught us make the work easy. It's like any difficulty. The practices Jesus gives us as disciples yoked to him,

include discipline. The root word in the word discipline, is disciple. Followers of Jesus are disciplined. It's like saying "Professional basketball players still run practices". It is the disciplines that make their skills look easy.

The disciplines Jesus taught us, yokes us together with his supernatural pulling power.

So, here we are in another "come to Jesus" moment. What have you been holding back? What is spilling out of your life because you are unyoked? What do you need to do to hold nothing back and walk with Jesus completely and wholeheartedly in everything? That is the path of the easy life. It is easy only by comparison with the unyoked life.

And that, my friends, is how to stay positive in a negative world. Come to Jesus. We are not merely waiting to get to heaven, when we yoke ourselves to Jesus, heaven reigns inside of us, and we bring some heaven down into our on earthly experiences and that is what makes these burdens lighter and easier for us and for everyone around us!