



LORDSHIP GENEROSITY

LEADER GUIDE | SESSION 1

Spending Time with Jesus



SCRIPTURE TEXT Matthew 11:28-30

SESSION IN A SENTENCE Our fast-paced world makes it difficult to have an ongoing, daily time with Jesus, but He invites us to spend time with Him where we find rest for our souls.

BIBLE BACKGROUND Jesus is at the height of His ministry. He was traveling the region offering a simple invitation to follow Him. He assured His would-be followers that His teaching was not like that of the Pharisees and Scribes. His teachings were capturing the attention of the elite religious leaders, along with everyday individuals.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS TODAY We live in a culture that is always on the move. The more appointments someone has on their calendar tends to communicate their importance and status. Business is often viewed as a sign of success, and this faulty thinking can be worn as a badge of honor. One outcome of this mindset is increased anxiety and stress in trying to keep up with an ever-increasing schedule. Jesus, however, does not invite us into more activity. Instead, He invites us to Himself, and offers us much needed rest for our souls.

BIBLE STUDY

Get Your Group Talking

ASK: “When you were the most relaxed you’ve ever been, where were you and what were you doing?”

Transition to the Bible Study

SAY, “We are not able to keep going without end. We all need rest at some point. Someone has rightly said, “You can’t run an engine at full speed all the time because it will seize up.” The question becomes, where do we find this rest? Our materialistic world would tell us that rest is found when we acquire more things. Our self-centeredness would tell us that rest is found in greater notoriety. Jesus tells us that rest is found in Him and Him alone. Furthermore, the rest He is offering is more than rest from our schedules – it is rest for our souls.”

INVITE your group members to fill in the missing blanks on their listening guide as you share each of the three main points in this study.

POINT 1: THE WEARY ARE INVITED TO REST

Matthew 11:28

ASK a group member to **read Matthew 11:28 out loud.**

²⁸ “Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

GUIDE group members to understand the text by sharing some of the following commentary notes:

Commentary

The first thing we learn from this passage is that there is an invitation being offered. Jesus offered for others to come to Him. He did not invite anyone to come to a set of beliefs or to a set of rules. Instead, He offered others to come to Him. When we take Him up on His invitation, our beliefs

and behaviors begin to change, and this change lasts a lifetime. But these changes are a result of accepting the invitation to come to Him.

We also learn that the invitation is offered to all who are weary. A quick study of the original language teaches us two things. First, the word weary means to work to the point of total exhaustion. If you have ever competed in a marathon or an endurance race, you know what it means to be completely exhausted. While some runners may have the goal of winning the race, others simply want to complete the race no matter their finishing position. They know they must finish before weariness sets in and causes them to stop running. This word picture helps us better understand what Jesus is saying.

Second, the wording is built in such a way as to communicate that those listening to Jesus were experiencing this extreme exhaustion. Weariness was more than a mere concept to them; it was their current reality. The Greek also reveals that

the exhaustion was due to self-imposed standards. They had no one to blame but themselves for their exhaustion.

Jesus not only invited the weary, He also invited those who were burdened. The word burdened indicates a continuous unbearable load that has been applied by someone else. Have you ever had a boss that no matter how hard you worked, he was never satisfied? You could work the extra hours, double-check your work, and even ask a co-worker to review things for you. Yet, in the end, you found yourself under scrutiny of your boss again. The result is a sense of defeat that often leads a person to stop trying. This is an accurate description of what it means to be burdened.

The question now becomes, what would cause someone to feel weary and experience this kind of burden. The answer is an individual's efforts to attain salvation on their own; a second reason we experience this kind of burden is because of a religious system built by man that imposes unnecessary rules and regulations on us. When we tell ourselves that we merely need to be a good person to obtain eternal life, we lie to ourselves. Our constant striving to be good enough to earn God's approval reflects we do not believe the lie. Also, when we listen to the religion of others telling us we need to complete their list of actions to be loved by Jesus, we experience a burden of unimaginable magnitude, leading us to not even try. This is what religion, and not a relationship with Jesus, leads us towards. This is the reason that Jesus invited others to come to Him. When we come to Him, only then do we find the rest that He promised. The word rest means to experience a sense of refreshing and renewal. When we come to Jesus, we know that we are not good enough to earn His approval. We understand that He is good

enough and has invited us. Our rest is found in acknowledging His completed work on the cross and not in our own efforts.

It is also important to point out that Jesus said, "I will give you rest." This statement is written as a fact. Jesus did not say that those who come to Him have the possibility of finding rest. He said that He will give those who pursue Him the rest they desire. Finding rest in Jesus does not mean that life all the sudden turns grand and we will be void of any additional struggles. Finding rest in Christ is about walking with Him throughout the struggles of this life. He never said we would be without struggle. Instead, He said that we would find the rest we need in Him.

DISCUSS: How can we help others who are seeking rest in something or someone else rather than Jesus?

DO: If your group is large enough, place the members into groups of two or three. Share with them the discussion question listed above. Lead them to come up with practical solutions or coaching tips that could be used to help someone who is seeking rest in someone or something other than a relationship with Jesus.

TRANSITION TO POINT 2: Say, "When we think about rest, we think about sitting in our favorite chair or spending time with good friends. We think about letting go of a few things that are causing us stress. Jesus, however, has a different plan. He calls us to set aside man's religion and pick up His teachings. We will see that merely setting aside man's religion does not give us the rest we desire. Instead, we are to pick up His teaching and thereby find the rest we want and need."

MY NOTES

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POINT 2: THE WEARY ARE INVITED TO RESTORATION

Matthew 11:29

ASK a group member to **read Matthew 11:29** out loud.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

GUIDE group members to understand the text by sharing some of the following commentary notes:

Commentary

As Jesus continued to teach and lead, He invited His followers to take up His yoke. A yoke was a tool that was to be placed upon an ox. The yoke was customized to fit each ox so that the ox did not experience struggle or difficulty while working. The ox, however, needed to submit to its owner. If the ox was unwilling to submit, then the work it was intended to accomplish would not be done.

Jesus called His followers to take up His yoke and thereby submit to Him. We know from His word that “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). Therefore, part of our submission to Him is to trust that He wants to use us for His work and not our own.

To accomplish this work, we must be willing to learn from Him. As we consider stewarding our time, it becomes important to recognize the need to spend time with Jesus. It is impossible to learn from someone that we do not know, or someone with whom we spend little or no time. Stewarding our time implies that we will spend intentional time with Jesus with the goal of learning from Him.

It is also important to point out that Jesus invited His hearers to learn from Him. Jesus did not tell them to go to someone else to learn about Him. The invitation was to learn directly from Jesus. God has gifted His church with pastors and teachers from whom we can learn, and we are thankful for them. Even with these talented leaders to help us know more about Jesus, the invitation that He offered centuries ago still applies today. We are still invited to submit to His teaching and to learn directly from Him daily as we read His Word, meditate on it, memorize it, and pray it.

It would be reasonable for us to ask why we would want to submit to Jesus and learn from Him. If we were to ask this question, we can quickly find the answer in this passage. It is best for us to submit and learn because Jesus is lowly and humble in heart. We can better understand what Jesus is saying when we understand that context in which He said it. The religious elite of His time offered a yoke as well. Their yoke was burdensome and oppressive. Those who chose to submit to them would never find the rest they desired. In fact, over 600 laws had been added by the religious leaders, making it impossible for anyone to truly and thoroughly live rightly. Jesus, however, offered a different approach. He did not lead with arrogance or oppression. He led with a humble heart.

Jesus’ humble leadership provided the needed rest for the souls of His followers. The word Jesus used here for rest is the same word He used in verse 28. Jesus expanded upon this teaching when He said that the rest is for someone’s soul. From a biblical perspective, the soul represents the center of who someone is. It is more that a perceived identity; it is who someone is at their core.

If we look at our calendars, we may determine that we need a vacation or a little time off. We can even agree that this is needed rest. The rest

that Jesus offered was not a break from someone's busy schedule. The rest he offered was at a much deeper level; He offered rest for a person's soul.

DO: Lead the class in a discussion about speed limits. Ask them what the speed limit is around the church. Ask them why we have speed limits and what would happen if everyone decided to ignore the speed limits. Point out that speed limits are truly for our own good and submitting to them will yield greater freedom and less pain. Say, "When we submit to the yoke of Jesus' teaching, we are not limiting ourselves. Instead, we are experiencing great freedom and less pain because He truly knows what is best for us."

TRANSITION TO POINT 3: Say, "Some of us struggle with saying 'yes' to everything. We find ourselves volunteering for another thing when we do not have the time. We find ourselves agreeing to another assignment at work when we are behind on our current workload. The result of our own actions is that we feel overwhelmed and burdened by our schedule. When we agree to spend time with Jesus, this is not adding to our already full schedule. Instead, being intentional to spend time with Him is anything but a burden."

POINT 3: THE WEARY ARE INVITED TO RENEWAL

Matthew 11:30

ASK a group member to **read Matthew 11:30 out loud.**

³⁰ *For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

GUIDE group members to understand the text by

sharing some of the following commentary notes:

Commentary

To properly understand this verse, we must first recall the context of Jesus' statement. The Pharisees and Scribes had a yoke that sought to oppress others. They started with the 10 Commandments and then proceeded to add hundreds of man-made rules. The Pharisees lived in such a manner as to entrap others within their man-made rules which resulted in bondage to a legalistic approach to God and life.

Jesus offered something much different. He said that His yoke was easy, and His burden was light. The word burden in the original language indicates something that is too great for one person to handle. This is why Paul told the church at Galatia to carry one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). Understanding the meaning of this word and placing it within the full context of the passage, we can determine that we cannot correct our sin problem on our own. The Pharisees espoused a works-based righteousness. Jesus offered a light burden because He was the one who was willing to bear the consequences of our sins. He knew that we could not carry this on our own and willingly took this burden upon Himself.

Spending time with Jesus is a joy and not a burden. Submitting to His yoke brings freedom and not entrapment. The offer He extended then is still available to us today. The question becomes, will we say yes to His offer?

DISCUSS: What is something we have done in the past that we thought would be strenuous, but once it became a habit it was enjoyable?

DO: Take a moment to share the gospel message. You can use the Roman Road, One-Verse Evangelism[®],

your personal salvation story, or whatever method with which you have the most comfort. Let them know that Jesus is inviting them to find rest for their souls, and this found only in a relationship with Him.

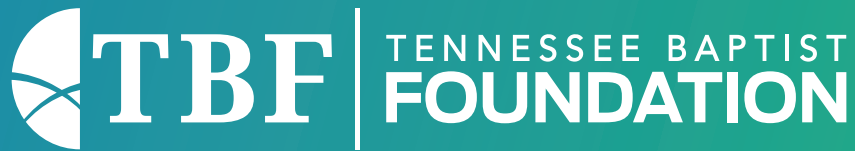
TRANSITION TO NEXT STEPS: Today's culture is not one in which rest is easily found. Yet, Jesus invites us into an ongoing relationship with Him. When we accept His invitation, we not only find the needed rest for today, but the hope for tomorrow. The following three steps are practical ways to apply these truths to your life today.



GUIDE group members to identify which of the following steps they will attempt before the group's next study. There is one step that is easiest, another that is more challenging, and a final one that will challenge even a spiritually mature group member. They are in random order in each session.

- 1. Accept Jesus' Invitation** – Jesus invited His original audience to come to Him and He invites today's audience to the same thing. He does not invite us to come to a set of beliefs or to more religious activities in an effort of self-righteousness. Paul told the church at Rome, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13). If you do not have a relationship with Jesus, will you say yes to His invitation and call upon Him as your Lord and Savior?
- 2. Spending Daily Time with Jesus** – As we learned, the yoke was a tool used to place someone or something under submission. The yoke that Jesus offers is not restraining, but rather light and restful to one's soul. Commit to spend a little time with Jesus each day this week. Ask Him to give you the faith need to submit to His teachings so that you can find the much-needed rest for which you long.
- 3. Share His Message with Another** – Who is someone that you know to be weary and in need of rest? Make a point to reach out to them this week and let them know that there is One who offers the relief that they need and desire. Commit to pray for this person for the next 30 days and let them know of this commitment.

SUMMARIZE the session: The Pharisees of Jesus' time offered a legalistic approach to self-righteousness. We may still find this today as some say we need to follow a set of rules to gain God's favor. Jesus did not agree with the legalism of His day, nor would he agree with legalism in the church today. Instead, He offers for us to come to Him, submit to His ways and find rest for our souls. This rest does not promise us a life without struggle, but it does promise that Jesus will be with us no matter the circumstances.



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