

**Monday 2-3-20:**

**Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)** <sup>28</sup> “**COME TO ME**, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> **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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

I believe that Jesus is the ONE WAY to finding ultimate help and healing when we are feeling overwhelmed. “Coming to Jesus” does not save us from life’s problems or turmoil’s BUT accepting Jesus’ invitation to be a part of his team – to be a member of God’s family opens the door to God’s provisions and help through anything faces us. Coming to Jesus or accepting Jesus means that we don’t merely ‘believe’ in Jesus, but we want to live according to Jesus’ values and Jesus’ ways. --- WE WANT TO BE A PART OF JESUS’ TEAM.

As with joining any team, there is an implied ACCEPTANCE to embrace and abide by the team rules and values. That is what Jesus means when he says that we are to TAKE HIS YOKE ... we are saying that we ACCEPT, FOLLOW & EMBRACE HIS RULES AND VALUES --- the RULES & VALUES OF BEING ON HIS TEAM. When we do this, Jesus opens up his clubhouse (so to speak) so that we can use and benefit from all the resources that his clubhouse offers including his coaching staff. Most important is that the HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD agrees to live in us and with us ... giving us a 6<sup>th</sup> sense of sorts that will help us live life and to have special access to God himself!

Once we COME TO JESUS, essentially JOINING HIS TEAM AND ACCEPTING HIS PROVISIONS AND TERMS, we THEN need to LEARN HIS PLAYBOOK and PRACTICE to play and master the specifics of playing the position that he has assigned us to play. Jesus knows that if we study and learn his playbook and PRACTICE (or LEARN THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS OF OUR POSITION) WE WILL FIND THAT LIFE IS FREER AND LIGHT ... THAT WE PERFORM BETTER WITH HIM ... AND THAT OVER TIME, WE WILL GROW IN OUR PROFICIENCY OF THE POSITION WE FIND OURSELVES.

As you pastor, I ask you ... HAVE YOU ACCEPTED JESUS’ INVITATION TO “COME TO HIM”? OR if you have at one time, but have grown slack in your embrace of the team values and of Spiritual Practices needed to grow in our position ... I INVITE YOU TO PRAY, **“DEAR JESUS, I WANT OT COME TO YOU AND TO BE A VITAL PART OF YOUR TEAM. I AM WILLING TO ACCEPT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE POSITION YOU’VE ASSIGNED ME AND I PROMISE TO PRACTICE AS YOU GUIDE ME AND HELP ME. IN JESUS NAME, AMEN.**

Congratulations and WELCOME ABOARD ... I am looking forward to helping you follow our coach and team leader (Jesus) in the power of the HOLY SPIRIT.

This week we will learn and practice more about the SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF “EXAMEN” --- a lot like reviewing game films of the day’s game. More about that tomorrow.

**TUESDAY 2-4-20**

This week’s key verse is Matthew 11:28-30.

**Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)** <sup>28</sup> “**COME TO ME**, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> **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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Yesterday we visited about the importance of **COMING TO JESUS** (JOINING JESUS’ TEAM); **ACCEPTING JESUS’ VALUES & RULES** (Jesus’ Yoke); and **LEARNING JESUS’ WAYS** (learning his playbook and **PRACTICING** the skills of living life as God would have us live.

Today we will consider learning and practicing the SPIRITUAL PRACTICE of 'The PRAYER OF EXAMEN". This is a daily prayer time at the end of the day where for a few minutes we take measure of the day and reflect upon the good and the bad of the day --- learning what we may and asking God to continue to strengthen and help us to do better the next day.

I would relate this SPIRITUAL PRACTICE to watching games films after a game. With the coaches help you watch and learn --- celebrating the good and noting the bad so that we can do better next time.

With the Holy Spirit's help, these few minutes of reviewing the day will help us to remember and to focus on the important basics of living life as a part of Jesus' team.

Today, I suggest that you ask yourself:

1. When did you feel most connected to God today? Give thanks to God.
2. Was there anytime that you felt that particularly disconnected from God or knew that you could have done better? Don't be consumed with guilt, but say ... God, I AM SORRY and please help me to do better. I promise that I want to grow and improve in the position you have placed me. AMEN
3. Then sit for a moment and listen for a sense of God's Spirit reminding you that you are a Child of God and that he loves you and will be with you --- helping you as you allow Him. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY 2-5-20

This week's key verse is Matthew 11:28-20. An alternative version is from the translation that is known as the MESSAGE.

**Matthew 11:28-30 (Message) <sup>28-30</sup>** "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? **Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life.** I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. **Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.** I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. **Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."**

What do you think of this version of Jesus' words found in Matthew 11:28-30?

What parts jump out to you as compared to the NIV version, which we have been using?

What does the reference to being "BURNED OUT ON RELIGION" connote to you? Have you ever felt that way about church?

As in the NIV version, Jesus again invites anyone who would like to 'COME TO ME" --- join me and live according to my ways ... LEARN FROM ME --- and I'll help you live with a better life-rhythm that you the ways of the world.

Jesus is saying that his ways are different than the world's but he promises you help and assures you that you will feel lighter and freer.

As Pastor --- I invite you to re-affirm your desire to live your life as a vital part of Jesus' team (i.e. God's family)

For today's Spiritual Practice of the PRAYER OF EXAMEN I invite you to consider the following questions:

1. Did you feel a little lighter or freer at any part of today? If so, how did it feel? Did you smile?
2. If not, what might it take to step into God's playbook ... what is it that you might need to practice to do better tomorrow?
3. Ask God for help to identify one or two areas of your life that you may need to commit to change so that you may better succeed in your position.

Dear God, thank you for another day ... please help me to be more aware of your coaching into my life and please help me learn your new ways for me and my family. AMEN.

## THURSDAY 2-6-20

This week's key verse:

**Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)** <sup>28</sup> "COME TO ME, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

In last week's sermon we used an illustration from the movie City Slicker's AND an illustration of the essential need to touch 1<sup>st</sup> base when a base runner is rounding the bases. The POINT is that there is absolutely ONE THING essential to us experiencing the POWER & PRESENCE of GOD in our lives. THIS ONE THING IS A BELIEF IN JESUS, affirmed by our willingness to try to live as Jesus (our coach) would have us live.

Formerly as a business executive and now as a pastor, I have, at times, found myself live according to and responding to the pressures of my position RATHER THAN FOCUSING ON JESUS.

Essentially, my priorities get distracted and turned around ... I take my eyes off of Jesus.

Likewise, I sometimes have lost sight of my God given priority to honor, serve, help and care for my wife and family --- truly making them a GOD GIVEN PRIORITY.

When I lose sight of Jesus and my love & commitment of my family, my life begins to unravel. I need to 'clear the deck' so to speak and remind myself to RENEW my priorities upon 1 THING --- JESUS and MY GOD GIVEN FAMILY.

As you take time to reflect upon today's activities ... I encourage you to focus on 1 reflection ... HOW DID YOU DO TODAY KEEPING AN AWARENESS OF JESUS AND YOUR LOVE FOR THOSE CLOSEST TO YOU?

Imagine what 'doing better' or being 'more aware' may look like.

Thank God for a good day and lift any thoughts or concerns to him.

Ask God for a good night's rest and for God's care upon those closest to you.

## FRIDAY 2-7-20

This week's key verse:

**Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)** <sup>28</sup> "COME TO ME, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Next week we'll those times in life where we may feel that God is nowhere to be seen or felt... we cry out "GOD WHERE ARE YOU?" We'll reflect some upon how we may open our lives to God so that our despair may turn to praise .... And we'll learn a new SPIRITUAL PRACTICE – THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER.

Now, to help wrap up this week ... I'll merely share a few reflection questions for you quiet time tonight ... remember this daily quiet time is a lot like watching game films --- a time when you and your coach (Jesus)

EXAMINE your day and identify the good and the bad ... always working towards the growing experience of God's Holy Spirit in your life ... and your growing proficiency of being lifted up like eagles wings.

1. Rehearse the day in front of you in your mind, pausing at each moment – thanking God for the opportunity that sits before you ... INVITE GOD to RESET YOUR HEART --- to CLEAR YOUR MIND AND LIFE SO THAT YOU MAY LIVE “FREE” ... and that you may help bring out the ‘GOD FLAVORS” of those you come in contact, especially your family.
2. Reflect upon the idea of being “WHOLE” and of being a star player on God’s major league team. ... imagine the good that God has asked you to share and pray for God’s strength to LEARN HIS WAYS ... as you continue to PRACTICE and IMPROVE.

**Week’s Ending Prayer:** Gracious and loving God, you are a God of new beginnings. You created us to be whole, unique, abundant-life-giving children ... a vital part of your team. Though we get too busy and disconnected before we even realize it, You are FULL OF GRACE to offer rest. You bring us back, refresh our spirit is, and make us whole again. As we begin this journey of wholeness, PREPARE our hearts to let go of what is holding us back. Teach us again what it means to live lightly and freely, walking with you each day. Come and be present in my conversations, my work, my play and my family. IN Jesus’ Name, AMEN