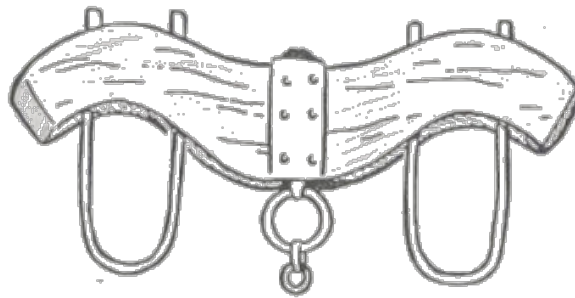


## Title: **His Yoke is Easy and His Burden is Light**

By Pastor Karl Bastian



*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

**Matthew 11:28-30**

If Jesus came to give us abundant life (John 10:10) and to make our joy complete (John 15:11), then why are so many in ministry worn out, stressed out, and secretly ready to drop out of ministry? Why is it that so often those who know they were called by God to serve Him find themselves second-guessing that same call when life and ministry become almost more than they can bear?

Whenever I am asked to speak or write on "avoiding burn out," I can't help chuckling to myself. Not because the topic is funny, but because the joke is on me. I know that when I needed to hear such things, I was unable or unwilling to. Why? I loved ministry! I was driven by the pressure that comes from wanting to make a difference. My favorite Calvin and Hobbes quote was when Calvin declared, "*I was placed on this earth to accomplish a set number of things. Right now, I am so far behind, I will never die.*" I love that quote, because it's how I feel – there is always more good stuff to do than time to do it – so I enthusiastically press on. Me? Burnout? I don't even have time for that! I'd be happy to put that on the back burner if you'd like. (Pun intended.)

I could not hear, see, or even sense the warning signs that were all around me. Even the few who graciously tried to gently confront me, I blew off and at times resented. You see, I am a high capacity person. I can do more than most. And I wondered how you could "burn out" from something that you completely and thoroughly enjoy doing. Burning out was for wimps. I think part of the problem is the term. It conjures up an image of a fire or explosion completely consuming the person. Instead, for me, it looks more like a car that runs out of gas and gets stranded.

The reasons for burnout are all good! We have a call from God, we are using our spiritual gifts to further the Kingdom, people's lives are being impacted, and we enjoy the feelings of success and significance as we work hard, giving all the glory to God, of course! There is an urgency that drives us on. People need God, and we are part of God's plan to save them! Rest is for wimps. I remember one fellow saying to me, "I'll have all eternity to rest, but right now there is work to do. I plan to land in heaven skidding to a halt." I can relate to that passion. It's great to have passion, but unrestrained passion isn't healthy.

Here is the reality that everyone in ministry needs to hear. If you are a passionate servant of God, you will reach a point of crisis. Whether you call it a collapse, a crisis, burning out, running out of steam, or a loss of your call, it will happen. Or, there is the alternative: learning to serve God with Spirit-fueled passion at a healthy pace.

As someone who has had to learn the hard way – and as someone who reached a point of needing to take a season out of ministry to heal my soul, my marriage, and my heart for ministry – I can only share the things I learned, as well as the things I knew but ignored, because, of course, they didn't apply to me. Guess what: they apply to you, too.

First, read this passage again:

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

**Matthew 11:28-30**

It is no secret that ministry can quickly lead to you becoming weary and burdened. And, yes, Jesus can give you rest. But the secret to real rest is found hidden in this verse, and many (including me for too long) overlook it.

What is the secret to rest and a healthy pace of ministry? Jesus says, “Take my yoke upon you.” What is Jesus' yoke? Let's assume in this high tech world we find ourselves in, you don't even know what a yoke is. A yoke is used to steer an animal as it does its work. A yoke is restraining. A yoke is limiting. A yoke guides against the will of the wearer. A yoke forces space between others, and a yoke is controlled by someone else. I kind of wish Jesus had said, “Ride my roller coaster” or “Get on my water slide.” That sure sounds a lot more fun than a yoke.

How is wearing a yoke good news? The verse goes on: while wearing it, learn from Him. With all the reasons we may not want a yoke, Jesus assures us we do not need to fear. The controller of the yoke is gentle and humble in heart. He isn't going to hurt us, and He wants what is best for us. But it is still a yoke. And wearing it is optional. That is why we are asked to put it on. Jesus does not force His yoke upon us; He offers it.

So what is Jesus' yoke?

His yoke is that which He is asking you to do. This is powerful and can be life changing. Let me say that again: Jesus' yoke is whatever HE is asking you to do. It is not what others are asking of you. It isn't even what you are asking of yourself. It is limited to what God has placed upon you. Burnout, or whatever you may choose to call it, comes only from when we add more to our load than God is asking. Notice the promise He makes: “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Did you catch those adjectives?

Read that again, and say the words in all caps out loud! “My yoke is EASY and my burden is LIGHT.” Do the words “Easy” and “Light” describe your life and ministry? This isn't to say everything ought to be easy. Of course there are challenges in life and hard work is necessary. Rather, this is referring to the load you have upon you. God will never ask you to carry more than you can bear easily. When your load is too heavy, it isn't God's fault. It isn't even your boss's fault. The responsibility belongs completely and entirely to you. Did you catch that? The weight of your load is your responsibility, because Jesus promised He will keep it easy and light. So if it isn't, you have only yourself to blame. This is a hard truth to swallow. But it is the truth that will save you, and the sooner you not only accept it, but embrace it, the sooner you will start to be able to skip and trot under a manageable load.

*There is an old story of a bus driver who was driving down a busy city street when he noticed an old woman struggling down the sidewalk with a huge box that appeared to be very heavy. She was walking slowly and struggling with every step. The bus driver pulled up next to her, opened the door, and offered her a ride. She replied that she didn't have the money for a bus ride, so the bus driver took some coins out of his pocket,*

*dropped them in the coin receptor, and said, "The ride is on me; come on in." Gratefully she got onto the bus with her box. The bus driver continued on his route. Several minutes later, he was surprised to notice in his mirror that the old lady was standing in the back of the bus still struggling to hold the box. At the next stop, he walked back to her and said, "Why are you still carrying your box? Why don't you sit down, rest, and enjoy the ride? We'll be to your exit soon." The lady smiled and answered, "Oh, sir. You were so kind to pay my way and give me a ride on your bus that I didn't want to bother you with the box also."*

Obviously, this dear lady missed the point that the bus was already carrying her load, and all she had to do was set it down and let the bus carry it for her. While we can chuckle at the absurdity of this story, aren't we just as silly when Jesus has paid to give us a ride, and yet in a warped sense of gratitude we insist on carrying things that He is already carrying for us? Unless you learn to set down your load, enjoy the ride, and pick up only what He asks, you will certainly burn out sooner or later. It isn't a matter of if, but when!

Certainly, this is easier said than done! So how do you get out from under the yokes of others (or yourself) and get under Jesus' yoke?

First of all, tell Jesus you would like His yoke! He is offering it – accept it! Tell Him that you are willing to let go of anything that He is not asking you to do. You have to mean this, because He may point to some things that you really like doing. Things you are good at – even better than anyone else. Things that you fear, if you don't do them, who will? If you are willing to listen, He is going to teach you the word "no." No to new things... and even "stop" to things you are doing.

Second, you need to take a completely honest inventory of everything you are doing, asking yourself, "Is Jesus asking me to do this?" You'll start re-evaluating everything you are doing. The criterion isn't whether something is important (I'm certain nearly everything you are so busy doing is important!) but whether it is what Jesus is asking of you. Often what we are doing is because of a self-inflicted sense of urgency. "It needs to be done," may be true. But that doesn't mean it needs to be done by you! But what if no one else will do it? Why does that make it *your* responsibility? It seems there are others not doing it that could, right?

Third, you will start to establish boundaries. You will limit your official time serving the Lord and start to prioritize your family and even begin to enjoy hobbies that have nothing to do with ministry! You will take the days off and vacation time you are given instead of sacrificing them as some martyr for the ministry. We all ought to be willing to die for Christ, but there is nothing spiritual about over-working for Christ. There is no reward in heaven for that type of martyrdom. Jesus' yoke will guide you and focus you as much as it restrains you. It will force you to work with others and eliminate all competition for who has plowed the most rows, sowed the most seeds, or conquered the most square miles.

Finally, you will quickly and graciously leave unhealthy environments. While you should never run from a challenge, you can run from spiritual abuse. When a work environment is unhealthy to your soul, your marriage, or your family, leave as quickly as you can with grace. Determine to keep your walk with God and family life healthy. If every meal and down time is spent discussing people or ministry issues, you may be in an unhealthy place. Often I hear, "But I can't leave because of the children." But whose children are they? Don't assume responsibility that doesn't belong to you. God loves and cares about the kids more than you ever can. He will be faithful to them. But He also loves and cares about you; and remember, His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Sometimes avoiding burnout means moving to a healthier field to plow.

Years ago I heard a true story that has stuck with me and often comes to mind. A young pastor was excited to have been hired as the new senior pastor at a rather large church. While he was excited, he was

also a bit nervous, being intimidated by the size of the church and concerned with whether he really had the skills to lead it. He was so thankful when he was able to secure an appointment with a nationally known pastor of another large and well-known church, whose name now escapes me. He wanted to pack as much learning into the one-hour appointment he had, so he came with a pad of paper and pen, and eagerly opened his heart to gain any and all wisdom he could from this respected pastor. After the initial greetings, they sat down and the younger pastor asked, "What can you tell me so that I can be successful and thrive in this new ministry? I'm open and eager to learn." The older pastor, seeing his pad of paper, replied, "Write this down," and the young pastor got ready to write. The pastor then dictated to him slowly, so he could get every word, "Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." The young pastor hurriedly scribbled down the words, eager for whatever would come next, and then looked up, asking, "What else?" The older man leaned back in his chair, smiled and said, "That's it. That's the secret to success in ministry." The younger pastor who shared this story said that he left disappointed and frustrated as he was hoping for so much more – but over the years has come to understand just how important that advice was and now shares the same "secret" with every pastor he meets.

Read this slowly to yourself three times: "Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

That is, indeed, the secret to not burning out. If you are always in a hurry and never have margin, you will miss out on God's sovereign opportunities that come every day. You miss time with your family and your yoke will quickly become overbearing and burdensome. Now is the time to accept Jesus' yoke, learn from Him, put the box down, and begin to ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.

Sincerely,  
Pastor Karl Bastian  
[www.kidology.org](http://www.kidology.org)

*If you need help in this area, please consider Kidology Coaching where a personal coach can help guide you to a place of healthier ministry. Visit: [www.Kidology.org/coaching](http://www.Kidology.org/coaching)*