

A friend once told me that when she was a little girl growing up in New York she wondered where Jesus got his eggs. I raised my eyebrows.....

She said she'd wanted to know if he bought them at the A & P like her mother did. One thing was sure—he must have a large supply. After all, he had said: “take my yolk upon you and learn from me.” She said she wanted to follow Jesus, and if he wanted her to get egged—then she'd do it!

She didn't ask her parents to explain—because she already knew what an egg yolk was.

We don't see many yokes today—seeing as most of us don't own oxen, and --even if we are farmers-- we probably don't yoke our farm animals together to plow our fields.

I could be wrong about that—I'm not much of a farmer-- but I don't think I'm going out on a limb here.

Yokes to carry loads—they are heavy.

Do you sometimes feel like the weight of the world is upon your shoulders? Ever feel like you can't measure up? That you're being held to impossible standards? You are not alone.

It's sometimes as if we are moving under a yoke made of iron.

Jesus knows how you feel. The yoke of Mosaic Law was supposed to be life-giving, and for some it was. But for many—because of how it was used and enforced—the yoke of the law of Moses had become a burden. Where originally there were 10 commandments—a loose outline to ensure good conduct within community. Soon, those 10 laws had multiplied into 613 very detailed and restrictive laws.

Where “love God and love your neighbor” had once sufficed—now we had laws governing how and what to eat, laws about what to wear, laws about what to do and not do-- laws so restrictive that even Jesus didn't follow them all. Jesus, in fact, took the Pharisees to task.

He spoke plainly about the burden of being yoked to the Law. He tells the crowd: ‘Beware of the Scribes and Pharisees. For they tie up heavy burdens and lay them on the shoulders of others [*like a YOKE*] but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger.’ It was kind of like “do as I say, and not as I do.”

I think many things start with good intentions.

If the 10 commandments are good, then let's really define what they mean—prepare for every contingency.

I mean-- look at us in the US—our laws were all predicated on the loose outline of people being able to have life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Now we have ridiculous laws on the books- like: it's illegal to have a snowball fight in Aspen, CO—or the US law that says it's a crime to sell "Turkey Ham" as "Ham Turkey". I can't make this stuff up....

But if you think being yoked to the Law is burdensome—imagine being yoked to something even more difficult.

Super sizing everything sounded like a pretty good idea a few years ago, but when the world starts super-sizing your to-do list, or your job, or your car pool duties, or your kid's activities, or your list of medicines, or your appointments—or any one of a thousand things that keep multiplying in this world—too much of even a good thing can become a burden.

Internet and television have been a tremendous boon to humankind but not without cost. Now around-the-clock news coverage relentlessly brings disturbing images of war, death, disease, anxiety and violence into our homes. And it happens every hour of every day.

There are many yokes in this world if we consent to them. Many things can become that heavy bar across our necks and backs: even things like career, success, ambition, the expectations of family-- even good things if multiplied excessively can become burdens.

And yet this is precisely why Jesus is so important today. Jesus offers a clear alternative to us and to the whole world:

Come to me—all of you who are dead tired and carry enormous heavy burdens—and I will give you rest.

Drop your yoke, and take mine instead. Learn from me. My yoke is easy and my burden is light.

What makes Jesus' yoke so different?

What are you yoked to?
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Perhaps partly because when Jesus says learn from me, he doesn't just mean "understand my teaching."

The Aramaic word Jesus uses for "*disciple*" doesn't mean pupil-- it means apprentice. An apprentice isn't one who learns by sitting in a classroom and ingesting knowledge for future use—an apprentice learns by doing. An apprentice woodworker learns the tools of the trade, then the basics, then the complexities.

An apprentice Christ- follower doesn't learn ABOUT Christ, an apprentice Christ learns by becoming Christ: first by learning the tools of the trade: love, compassion, and then moving on to the basics, and then the complexities.

Jesus doesn't merely invite us to take up his yoke he wears it with us.

Jesus empowers us to say no to the yokes of the world that do not matter-- and yes to the ones that do: love and compassion--and not just compassion for others, but compassion for ourselves.

So when we are tired from life or burdened by the yokes of this world, remember: Jesus is here to make the load lighter—by carrying it with us, and by reminding us what our burden is to bear: we are here to bear the Light.

Amen.