

The Yolk



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)

When I ask my two-year-old Labrador retriever, “Want to go for a walk?” she becomes a leaping, wiggling bundle of joy. I hold out the leash and the prong collar, a restraint that gently pokes her if she pulls too hard. Maggie doesn’t turn away, she comes and slips her head willingly into the collar. She knows the only way a walk will happen is when she is harnessed to me. Then we can explore the wooded trails she loves.

When we say to Jesus, “I believe in You and trust you for my salvation,” we begin a walk with Him. Much as I hold the collar for my pup, Jesus holds out an invisible harness for us. We can anticipate delightful, shaded paths and rest for our souls if we slip into the yoke and stay connected to our Lord. He may lead us also onto rocky, difficult paths, but He will remain yoked with us. Occasionally the collar may restrain, or poke us, or even lead us a different direction than we are headed, but being harnessed with the One who loves and knows us best will ultimately bring us peace and joy.

Conversing With My Guide

Lord Jesus, may I accept your yoke with joy, knowing it is the only way I can go on the paths you have prepared for me.

Climbing Higher

Read 1 John 1-3

Stepping Out in Faith

Place a bracelet, rubber band, or string around your wrist for a day. Picture yourself in a harness with Jesus. Use the bracelet to remind you to thank Him for the opportunity to walk with Him, learn from Him, and have rest for your soul.

Trail Notes (questions, insights, prayers)

Backpacks



Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. (Psalm 55:22)

One of the first and most important items on a hiker's list is the backpack. I chose mine carefully—making sure it fit comfortably, had all the right pockets, and didn't weigh too much. And, of course, I chose an attractive aqua color. Then I added all the necessary items: water, first aid kit, cooling towel, phone, extra camera, guidebook, maps, my lunch and snacks, food and collapsible dish for my dog, Maggie, extra socks, a flashlight, a safety whistle, a journal, water purification system, and, wow! my pack got heavy. And I had none of the essentials a through-hiker would carry such as a tent, sleeping bag, and cooking utensils.

I looked over my pack's contents again, sorting what I was certain was necessary and what could be unloaded. At last, I hefted my much lighter pack onto my back and strapped it on. I no longer carried weight I didn't need.

Walking through life, we carry backpacks, too. When we are children, they are relatively light. Maybe a worry or two about who will be your friend or your score on a spelling test. These concerns are quickly discarded within days.

But as we grow, we load our packs with weightier items—career choices, marriage, and children. We jam things in tightly as our families grow and our teenagers begin to navigate their way in the world, adding their worries to our own. By the time we have grandchildren, these backpacks can become monstrous burdens. But we still stubbornly

attempt to carry them.

Our loving God does not intend for us carry these burdens. He is the Sustainer who will provide for our needs and the needs of our loved ones. Empty those backpacks into His caring arms and you will hike higher and farther than ever before.

Conversing With My Guide

Jesus, the burdens I carry wear me down. I am exhausted in body and soul. Help me to release my anxieties to you and trust in your perfect peace.

Climbing Higher

1 Peter 5:7

Psalm 68:19

Isaiah 26:3

Matthew 6:34

Stepping Out in Faith

Make a list of the items in your backpack—the worries and anxieties you are trying to carry yourself. Pray over each one, releasing them to the One who cares for you.

Trail Notes (questions, insights, prayers)
