Our Savior has said time and time again that his yoke or burden is light. He offers to help carry our burdens and lighten the weight of our struggles if we will but accept his burden. But what does that even mean? How does accepting his burden make what we have to suffer in this life easier? Can we expect to have our trials and suffering eliminated all together? What does he really expect from us in exchange for his promised help?

The invitation

In Matthew 11:28-30 the Savior invites us all to come to him, take upon ourselves his yoke (burden), and learn of him. His promise, in exchange for our willingness to do this, is that we will find rest to our souls.

> 28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
>
> 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
>
> 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

This passage is packed with implication and promise. Before we get into what is required and what is promised, let's look at what this whole yoke expression refers to.

The yoke

Beasts of burden, like oxen or cattle are often yoked, tethered, or bound together to accomplish difficult tasks that might prove impossible for just one to do on their own. The beauty of the yoke as an instrument of work is that it enables the farmer to link two animals of unequal strength together in such a way that neither animal is pulling more weight than it can bear.

The ideal relationship is to yoke two "equally yoked" animals. In other words, two animals of equal size and ability. This is the optimal pairing for labor. But often times this is not possible. One ox may be much older and weaker than the other or one is in

its prime while the other is young and inexperienced. This is the case with us and the Savior. He has great power and ability, while we are weak and inexperienced.

By yoking, or linking ourselves with Christ, he is able to carry more of the workload that might otherwise overwhelm us. The question is, how do we yoke ourselves with the Savior? How do we take upon ourselves his yoke or burden?

Christ's yoke defined

The purpose of mortality is to try us and test us to see if we will obey God in all things (Abraham 3:25, 26). At stake in this test is eternal glory that will be added to us "for ever and ever."

> 25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;
>
> 26 And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

The yoke of Christ is this test to see if we are willing to be obedient in all things. In other words, will we keep whatever commandments he gives us? Will we willingly pay our tithing? Will we keep the Word of Wisdom to the best of our ability, instead of looking for ways to skirt its requirements any way we can without outright violating it? Are we willing to attend the temple and keep ourselves worthy? Are we willing to minister to each other, even if we don't see the point? Are we willing to pray morning and night, individually, and as a couple and family? There are many requirements.

This is his yoke, but we also have the trials of life to contend with. We have capricious employers and governments to deal with. We have unjust people who cheat us or treat us unfairly. We have accidents and tragedies that rob us of loved ones, health, and abilities. We have bodies that age and break down, get sick and diseased. We have temptations and wicked people who seek to destroy not only us, but our loved ones. Let's face it, life is a battle field, and no one makes it out alive.

How is his yoke any easier?

Christ's statement in Matthew 11 I quoted above tells us that we labor in this life and are heavy laden. Can we really say that this does not describe us? He promises to give us rest. He does not specifically state this, but it is implied that without his yoke our burdens will remain heavy to bear. He specifically states that his burden is light or easy to bear. How does that work?

Christ says that we must come to him, learn of him, and take his yoke or his burden upon ourselves. Only when we do this will our personal burdens become light and our souls will find rest. To come to Christ and learn of him is what happens when the missionaries teach people about the gospel plan and invite them to come to Christ through baptism. We come to Christ when we make sacred covenants with him. We learn of him as we study the scriptures and pray to learn of his ways and as we listen to the Holy Spirit's promptings.

When we learn how to live the commandments out in the real world, we begin to discover that a commandment is a law that creates happiness. This is why Alma says to his wayward son, Corianton that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Lasting happiness is based on the laws that create happiness. Looking for lasting joy in any other way will produce nothing but disappointment.

The more we seek to learn of Christ's ways and his commandments the happier we will be. Does that alleviate all our suffering? Nope. But our obedience does something better. When we obey God's laws He is able to bless us in ways that help us progress to become more like Him. Our trials become stepping stones toward eternal glory. Keeping the commandments generates a hope that lifts our spirits and gives us added strength that isn't available in any other way. If we are not obedient, His hands are tied, and He is not able to give us the same blessings. We must suffer through our trials without His support. In Doctrine and Covenants 130:20, 21 the Lord says this:

> 20 There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—
>
> 21 And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

God cannot bless someone who has not lived the law that brings that blessing. It is as simple as that. The trials of this life are meant to refine us, tone our spiritual abilities, and make us more like Christ. They are designed to create celestially worthy people. We

need these trials. Keeping the commandments allows the Lord to send the Spirit to comfort us, guide us, and teach us of his love for us. This is what makes the troubles of life more bearable. We begin to see that all these painful experiences truly have a use and a purpose.

Final Thoughts

The trials and labors of this life, without the perspective of being a refiner's fire, makes life just plain hard. Without a purpose to our sufferings, is it any wonder that people lose heart and feel feint in the daily struggles? The Lord has promised us answers to our prayers, and not just any answers. In Doctrine and Covenants 112:10 he promises us that he will take our hand and lead us. The image it conjures is one of a father leading a child to protect him.

> 10 Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.

If we will come to Christ, learn of him, and keep his commandments, we are promised that all things will eventually be ours. Think of anything in the universe. It all belongs to God, our Father. He has promised all of it to his son, Jesus Christ. Christ has promised to share all of it with those who are willing to obey his commandments and who have learned to love him more than they love the world. This knowledge alone should make our burdens in mortality easier to bear.

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

What Does it Mean to Carry Christ's Yoke?