

Yoking Up With Christ

By: Sally Hohnberger

Christ says to all of us who sense the pull and rule of sin, self, and the flesh, to find release from the dominion of anger, passions, emotions or feelings, pride, or any weakness of character to ... "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yes, but how Lord? "Take my yoke upon thee ..." Matt 11:28-29. This is the prescription for the healing of **all** spiritual, mental and physical ills. All disobedience, all emotional battles, all my problems even my marriage, my children and my church? Yes all! The yoking up with Christ represents our consent to let Him lead us. It represents our union and communion with Christ. And it represents our surrender to do the will of God over our own will and way. For God promises, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Heb 13:5 "I will guide thee continually." Isa 58:11.

God led me to reflect upon my personal experience in a human yoke 10 years ago when Jim and I were gathering trees to construct a greenhouse to enhance our gardening abilities to grow more than cold weather crops in our mountain gardens of Montana. As I meditated on the physical aspects of putting on the human, wooden yoke, that yoked Jim & I together, to work to pull out those 20 foot long trees out of the woods where there were no roads, I began to understand spiritually what God was asking me to do, in yoking up with Christ. I'll share a couple of those lessons with you.

Jim was real, right at my side, we shared the yoke. I talked with him often, and looked to him for direction with each hill, knoll, valley, and obstacle we came upon, in order to follow him and to work effectually together. By experience I discovered that only one can lead when yoked together. If I pulled this way and Jim that way, we went nowhere, our efforts were in vain. Do you ever feel your efforts in the Christian walk are in vain? "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3. I had to decidedly choose, to stop leading and learn to let the wiser and stronger lead, and be communicating in words or looking to his eyes to guide me, or his hands to gesture what direction we'd take next. He made the best decisions, I'd surrender and follow his leading. So must Christ lead in our lives. This is yoking up with Christ.

Jesus can be just as real in my walk today as Jim was in the human yoke that day. Paul, the apostle experienced that. The communion Paul enjoyed was more intimate, more enduring than a mere earthly and human companionship. (Philippians 3:7-10)

Ellen White in the book *Desire of Ages* pages 675-676 wrote: "This union ... is no casual touch, no off-and-on connection ... The life you receive from Me can be preserved only by continual communion. Without Me you cannot overcome one sin, or resist one temptation. Abide in me and I in you. Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving

of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open **continually** between man and his God."

Continual union and communion is a must in our Christian walk.

Christ is real too, right at my side sharing the yoke. When an opportunity to witness or help someone arises, do I ask the Lord's will before I go, or am I so used to leading I don't think to ask first? Like, "Lord Lazarus is sick and dying, shall I go heal him right away?" If I seek God's will first, He may want me to wait several days before I go, for He is wiser in meeting the world's and individual's real needs, right? In my human wisdom alone, I would have wrongly run to help Lazarus and would not have been doing God's will would I? We fail to take the quiet time alone, that's necessary to really know God's will in every matter of life. Self is bent to rule over the great and small issues of life. And this must change!

Do you find this to be the case in your life? Do you call yourself a Christian, a follower after Christ, yet in your words and life's actions you demonstrate, "I will not have this Jesus lead me"? For instance: Fathers, are you so busy going here and there involved in this or that outreach, speaking, teaching or helping others, while your own family languishes in need of a priest, parent or husband to meet their needs? Do you neglect or avoid asking God if you should go first, for fear He will tell you no or not now? Are you fearful God will ask you to work with your wife, your children or your own character weaknesses first before you are fitted to help others?

Mothers, do you spend so much time on the telephone supposedly helping others, while your children are in dire need of your time and instruction to learn how to work effectively in the home duties and how to surrender their will to Jesus successfully? Then as a result of our lack of time they daily struggle with obvious defective character traits of slothfulness or unwillingness to obey you? Are you asking God to lead you whether you should even answer that phone call? Do you ask Him what you should say or shouldn't say when you are on the phone? Or are you fearful God will ask you to deny talking on the phone and work with your children instead? And lastly, in your personal lives, do you consult with God before you buy this or that item of food or personal item? Or again, are you fearful God will ask you to deny yourself, so you just fail to ask? Self does not like to be led, it wants to lead and be independent, (like Satan) of God's restraint and His position of

leading. Will you and I turn square about and let God lead in every detail of life? Yoking up with Christ seeks His will and way before we think or act. That is dependency upon Christ!

This spirit of independence strives one way in the yoke while Christ is directing another way. God is interested in every detail of my life and wants to have access to direct us in what we think, say and do, He loves us that much. He wants to save us from all evil having rule over us. Am I looking in God's eyes that He may guide me with His eyes, this way or that? Am I sensitive to His voice to my heart when my emotions are high with the temptation to get angry back to my spouse? Do I first, filter all my words and thoughts to God before they find utterance? When I do this it seems my selfish, independent will is crossed, for when I am tempted to give angry words, God asks me to be silent and walk with Him until self is subdued. When I'm lowly in heart and have no desire to speak, to direct or instruct, God asks me to speak hard things to my spouse, and in doing God's will in His time, it may be difficult at the moment but it proves to be a blessing in the end. This requires a surrender on my part, and union and communion with God through every situation. Through this process we learn to filter all through Christ

and are learning how to let Christ lead us away from serving self and into serving righteousness, with Christ beside me and in me. Will I let Christ rule over me? Jesus can be very real and helpful in my life today, if I let Him lead me. Many in Bible history and today say with the rich young ruler in words or deeds, "I will not have this Jesus rule over me."

Jim and I pulled trees out of the woods, around obstacles, down a valley, then headed up a hill that was without question, impossible for my strength. I looked to Jim, he nodded indicating, together **we can** do it, lets go!

Doesn't God challenge us to do hard things with Him, in that same cheerful, confident manner as Jim did here? Imagine what it would be like if I pulled against him, got distracted in the flowers there, inattentive by choice, or just passively laid back in the yoke. The Leader is in the yoke, but its going no where without my cooperation in the task. The tree (my trials, heavy burdens or character weaknesses) will go no where either will it? So is the case too often, in our so-called walk with Christ. We quit in despair when we see the hill of difficulty before us. We want and expect Christ to carry the yoke, the burden, and me up the hill.

For example, "Lord you take my rebellious, disobedient

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child or teen, you discipline and train him for me. Return him to me tomorrow holy, gentle, compliant and a cheerful worker." We want life easy. We want and are often waiting for, Christ to do our part as well as His. Friends our cooperation in the yoke is first seeking after Christ to lead and instruct me now. Then moment by moment and day by day, cultivating in those Christ-like character traits, that's my responsibility in child rearing. It requires little attentions often with Christ at my side, subduing my "self" and my child's "self". To put on the yoke of Christ represents our surrender to consult and let God lead and instruct me at every step of the way in child rearing and character training. It also represents our will to work, its the putting forth of all our effort, with Christ at my side, in instructing, disciplining and training the will of my child how to surrender his self to God to be changed. We too often think the hill of difficulty (child rearing and character training) is impossible, so we are passive in the yoke and wonder why we go no where, and why my child does not become Christ-like in thoughts and manners? We must get our eyes off the hill of difficulty and onto Christ to lead us up the hill in His strength! Can we walk or work together unless we talk, agree, and cooperate together?

Jim and I cooperating together, giving all my effort in the yoke surmounted that hill. Whoosh ... went that tree up the hill. At the top I gave Jim's strength, all the credit for the success, it was much easier than I expected in anticipation. That's the benefit of the yoke! Jim said he couldn't have done it without me. Christ can't raise our children, or change our marriage relationships, or change our character without our cooperation either. Yet together we can do hard things. Yoked with Christ we can surmount any hill of difficulty, trial, passion, or character weakness. The strength is God's, yet without our cooperation in submission and actions, God can do nothing to change our life's burdens and get us up that hill to a changed life.

Christ is interested in every detail of our life and awaits our choice to yoke up with Him and be led by Him, so He can have access to our life and show us how to live upright, holy lives through connection with Him. God wants to free us from every bondage. From the bondage of eating disorders, drinking disorders, even taste disorders as the caffeine habit, the vinegar, or sugar habit. From the bondage of our passions, licentiousness, anger, irritation, fretfulness, faultfinding, all feelings, lying thoughts, gossiping, all weak character traits, or even shyness.

We tend to cling tenaciously to our own frailties, pas-

sions, and prejudices as though if we let them go we would no more have happiness in this life, when they are thorns, pricking, bruising thorns. Jesus invites us to lay down the yoke we have been bearing, which has been galling our necks, and take His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light. How wearisome is the load of self-love, covetousness, pride, passion, jealousy, and evil surmising. Yet how closely do men clasp these curses, and how loathe are they to give them up. Christ understands how grievous are these self-imposed burdens, and He invites us to lay them down. The heavy-laden and weary souls He invites to come to Him, and take His burden, which is light, in exchange for the burdens which they bind upon themselves. He says:

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden light." The requirements of our Saviour are all consistent and harmonious, and if cheerfully borne will bring peace and rest to our souls.

All my failures in my walk with Christ are due to my inattentiveness to this continual union and communion with heaven. It is due to my lack of crying out for help to Christ on a moment by moment basis. It is my independence from God, going through life's trials and perplexities alone, not abiding with Christ in the yoke, not submitting to let Him rule and lead in my life that was the cause of

many of my difficulties and the cause of all my griefs, heartaches and failures when I am honest. So how do I let Christ lead practically speaking?

When I begin my day by consecrating and surrendering, rising early in the morning, spending time with my God, then when I open my refrigerator door to begin my days duties and God speaks through my conscience, "Sally, why is that mayonnaise in your refrigerator?" Will I remain yoked? God is then with me but He wants to be in me, in order to cleanse (change) me from wrong tastes, ways, and thoughts, will I cooperate? Not until the battle with self is fought and I choose to follow Christ's way completely, can He change me inside through the Holy Spirit. There is in our nature, a bent to evil, a force which unaided, we cannot resist. To withstand this force ... we can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. **Cooperation** with that power is man's greatest need. Without my cooperation, God can do nothing to change me. So what is the battle like?

Self arises and justifies itself by responding, "Its non-dairy mayonnaise Lord." I made mention of where I obeyed, but left unsaid the disobedient part. The flesh unaided by Christ will side step the real issue; will I yield up

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my will to His revealed will or will I excuse myself? God strives with me to bring me to a decision to do right through a continuous, vital connection with Christ my Saviour from self. Alone, I cannot obey continually. Are you familiar with this daily battle with self?

God loves me so much he does not enter into controversy with me but instead asks calmly again and again, until I'm completely open and honest, "Sally, why is that mayonnaise in your refrigerator?"

In a short time I yielded to talk openly, honestly with my Lord and say, "Lord there is only a little vinegar in this mayonnaise and you know I just like mayonnaise. I know vinegar is not good for me, in fact it is harmful to me, but you're asking a hard thing Lord! You see with all the pulls on my time, home-schooling, traveling and speaking for you, etc. I don't have the time necessary to experiment and make up a healthy, low oil, non-vinegar, yet tasty recipe. What should I do Lord?" **This is the secret** to success ... **submission** (yielding) to wear the yoke of Christ **leading** my life, His way. Will I **seek and follow** Christ's will where ever He leads me? That will take a decided surrender won't it? Who is leading in your life?

"Trust and obey; for there is no other way" was the song God brought immediately to mind. In my heart, I consent God's ways are best, I surrendered my will to His will by a choice to cooperate with my Lord (Leader) by the action of throwing out that mayonnaise right away. This is the battle with self I went through. God asked me to do a hard thing in denying self, didn't He? But He stayed right there yoked with me giving me strength for the task as I surrendered. My tastes (appetites) and inclinations were in direct opposition to the will of God. Still I yielded up my appetites and desires to be changed, inside by God's grace. And trusting He would give me a healthy alternative sooner or later, again in His time not mine. This is practicing the presence of God and yoking up with Christ. It's letting Him lead my life, to be my Lord. It's experiencing Him to be a real helper to me right now. I'm talking with Jesus as though He is physically right there beside me. I am depending upon Jesus to change me inside, to do what I cannot do, change my will, tastes and feelings, but I am also doing my part cooperating and doing what is right. James 4:7 shows us the **important order** in which to do this, #1 "Submit yourselves therefore to God (our choice + surrender). #2 Resist the devil (self-denial and self-control united with Christ) and #3 he will flee from you. (Appetite will come into subjection to Christ)" Am I in Christ ... this is the secret for success in subduing sin and self!

Does God bless this union and communion with Him? Oh yes! He gave me peace in my emotions in His time not

mine, placed a calm trust in my surrendered heart. That is a miracle! He also gave me, very soon, an unexpected opportunity to create a good recipe that was easy to prepare, and tasted good. God is so good. The secret thickener was potato flour, lessening the need for oil and I used lemon juice instead of vinegar. God loves to bless and lead us in this personal way. The key factor is will I yoke up with Christ now, and will I in Christ's strength fight the battle with self?

Won't you choose today and every day, every moment to yoke up with Christ in this life of self-denial through a connection with a Saviour from self? Won't you bring before Christ your trials ... your temptations ... your passions, feelings, emotions ... your perplexities in life ... your child training ... your marriage, that He may instruct thee in the way which thou shalt go, He will guide thee with His eyes, for that is the kind of God we can serve. In this way we can all successfully surmount these hills of difficulty and walk uprightly. Won't you yoke up with Christ that He may be your Lord and Saviour?

Power for Living



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