

- ♦ **"Yoke"** usually signifies submission to authority in the Bible (e.g. the yoke of the Law). The yoke was a **heavy wooden collar** that ran across the shoulders of a pair of oxen in ancient agriculture. It enabled the animals to jointly pull enormous weights. But note that **Jesus' yoke**, in vs 30, is in contrast to the burdens he saw people carrying. His yoke is **"light"**, **"easy"**. The inference is of something good and satisfying.
- ♦ **"REST"** speaks of refreshment, relief, not mere cessation from work. Note that it is for **your souls** (v. 29)

Jesus doesn't invite us to a life that is burdensome and worrying. He is calling people to a close relationship; a **strong bond**. Unlike religious leaders and teachers of that time, he is **"humble"** and **"gentle"**.

- ⇒ Jesus is pointing to **relief** from the crushing anxiety and futility and frustration that people experience in life.
- ⇒ It is a new way and a **new "work"** to which we are invited, joined to Jesus' in God's work of reconciliation, peace, mercy and justice, without the anxiety of wondering whether we are right with God.

### What to do next?

1. **Think** The ancestors/patriarchs new REST as a physical/geographical promise. Wisdom writers knew it as a poetic/symbolic hope. What difference does it make to know our REST is a person—Jesus? What dimensions and possibilities are now offered to all?
2. **Act** Do you have any anxieties about approaching God in prayer? Any doubts that you are acceptable to God now that you are joined to Christ by faith? **Let it go** and **accept** this new status before God and count it a great blessing (read Romans 5:1-11). Give thanks to God each day for this truth and enter God's presence with confidence.
3. **Serve** If Jesus' offer of REST is not "time off", what might his "light" and "easy" burdens look like in practice today? In what senses might serving others—working for reconciliation, mercy, justice, peace, etc. with the help of God's Spirit—be "easier" than the lives of others who don't know this bond with Jesus?

The members of St. Michael's Anglican Church acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional custodians of this land, and pay our respects to their elders past, present and future.

## 7 STREAMS of GRACE



Do you remember the board game, Battleships? Opponents would each place toy ships on their own plastic grid running from A-J and 1-10 hidden behind a screen? One player calls out a coordinate like B6, and the opposing player looks at the toy ships on their hidden board to discover a "hit" or "miss".

Our sermon series *Seven Streams of Grace* (SSoG) divides the whole Bible up into a huge rectangular grid, similar to the old board game. A large poster hangs in the church space or can be found on-line. The rows represent the "streams" or themes of God's saving grace that run through the valley and rivers of the whole Bible, and the columns represent the "eras" (milestones in Biblical history) in which each book of the Bible is set. This Bible study is part of the journey and can be used as a devotional study, but is best suited to group discussion. Join us on this journey along the rivers of grace down the ages for life, for love and for our salvation.

- Steve Webster

### Bible Study Notes for session #2 REST

#### 1. Warm Up

Can you think of any **famous mixed metaphors** from politicians or celebrities? Share one.

Here are some other examples:

- "He was marooned in the jaws of a human minefield, and with every step the noose grew tighter." — Sports columnist Jerry Izenberg in The Star-Ledger (of Newark, New Jersey)
- Elton John's Princess Diana version of *Candle in the Wind* is notorious. She's a candle, but she's also a rose and a golden child, capable of leaving footprints on England's green hills; plus she's equipped with wings of compassion. Some suggest Diana's cause of death was wind, rain, and/or the fading of the sunset!

- ⇒ Mixed metaphors in great literature have been with us down the ages.  
**Question:** who wrote this one, and where's it taken from?  
 "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them?"

- ⇒ **Question:** How many metaphors are mixed in this important verse of Scripture...  
 "...we have this sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine, behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" (Hebrews 6:19)  
 (listen to the sermon on REST for more at <http://www.stmichaelsnc.org.au/?p=2461>)

## 2. The Bible's great theme of REST

- ⇒ **Read** Jesus' statement in *Matthew 11:28-30* and the Old Testament verse that he seems to refer to (*Exodus 33:14*).
- ⇒ **Divide your group** into pairs and assign some of the verses in the list within the graphic to each pair. Each pair should report back to the main group on what the word or theme of REST seems means in that given era of biblical history.

**Question:** How do these different understandings of God's gift of REST inform us about the kind of REST Jesus offered in Matt. 11:28-30?

**Exercise:** Print the picture cards from the top line of the big SSOG poster representing the different eras of the Bible from the link below or ask the church office to print them for you.  
<http://www.sevenstreamsofgrace.com/media/handouts/ssog%20TOP%20LINE%20art%20cards%20A4.pdf>

The Stream of REST through the Bible		
➤ <b>Origins</b>	REST celebrated, then lost	Gen. 1 & 3
➤ <b>Ancestors</b>	A place of REST is promised	Gen. 13 & 23
➤ <b>Exodus</b>	The land of REST is entered	Deut. 8:7-10
➤ <b>Kings</b>	Earthly REST & security	1 Kings 4:25
➤ <b>Wisdom</b>	Greater REST yearned for	Psalms 23
➤ <b>Prophets</b>	Prince of peace to bring REST	Micah 5:2-5
➤ <b>Remnant</b>	REST for the exiles	Nehemiah 12
➤ <b>Jesus</b>	our true REST is a person	Matt. 11:25-29
➤ <b>Church</b>	our eternal REST is secure	Heb. 6:18-20
➤ <b>End Time</b>	the 'city' of REST to come	Rev. 21

**Cut** the page of pictures into individual cards. **Distribute** the cards randomly to pairs in your group so that each pair has several cards representing random eras. **Ask** each pair to have a go at explaining God's promise of REST in each era given them (Just a few ideas in their own words will do—this is a great way to see if your group is learning what sort of expression of God's grace we are studying).

## 3. Considering Jesus

The most important era for study of REST is that of Jesus' earthly ministry. Regarding "REST", hear are some passages to learn from:

- ⇒ **Read** Matthew 11:25-30; Exodus 33:14; Matthew 23:4; 1 John 5:3; Ephesians 2:14-18; Colossians 1:20-22
- ⇒ **Question:** What seems to be the nature of REST in these passages? In what ways might you explain Jesus' fulfilment of the promises of God here?

## Going deeper

Returning to **Matthew 11:28-30**, let's unpack the verses a little...

- ◆ **come to "me"** v.28, for he has shown that he has access to God the Father like no other has
- ◆ the **weary and the heavily burdened** (v. 28, see Matt 23:4) – religious leaders of the 1st Century tied "up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; (yet) they themselves (were) unwilling to lift a finger to move them." This troubled Jesus much.
- ◆ **Jesus includes** in his invitation:
  - ◆ all who are **weary from searching for truth** and for relief from their troubled consciences, and
  - ◆ any **weighed down by observing rules**, expectations of others, and laws, and religious duties without relief or satisfaction, and
  - ◆ all who are **sorrowful in life**, for we know that without true faith in Him troubles can be so destructive
- ◆ **"I will give you REST"**. As mentioned above, Exodus 33:14 may be in view here, giving us yet another instance of Christ's divinity revealed
- ◆ Jesus says in vs. 29: **"Take my yoke upon you..."** i.e. take up, lift up, (see Luke 9:23) suggesting "follow", serve; to which he adds "to learn"