

The Paradox of Submission 2024 March/April ***A Word of Hope***

by Lisa Hall, international prayer coordinator

Matthew 11:28-30 “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.” (pull quote for side)

How do you picture God? What words would you use to characterize him?

As I pray to God, I often picture him just as he describes himself in the Bible. I see God as my Father, Jesus as the Good Shepherd or my teacher and the Holy Spirit as my guide. As I read the Scriptures, I imagine the words coming from God to me in conversation and we talk about them together.

I love the picture of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30. He is the gentle and humble master inviting me to walk beside him so that I can learn from him as we live out life together. And being yoked to Jesus, in submission to him, is the key that I must embrace in order for this to work. It is God’s divine order of the way things were meant to be. And the result? I will find rest for my soul! What a paradox: Submission to God actually brings freedom in my life.

If we are honest with ourselves, we fear and dislike the word “submit.” It is in our human fleshly nature to not want to bend our knee to anyone or anything, wanting to be the master of our own destiny. Yet God calls us to submission. So why am I afraid to be fully submitted to him? Do I fear that it will be too difficult, that my dreams and desires won’t be realized? Am I wrestling with the questions “Do I truly believe that God loves me?” and “Do I actually believe that God is good?”

No one would want to submit to a tyrant who does not care about you or who abuses you. But when we look at the character of God and what he has done for us, what do we find? When we look at the words of Scripture, we come to understand God as the good, merciful, loving, compassionate, gracious, slow-to-anger, faithful one who forgives our wickedness, rebellion and sin, yet is just.

So, what do we fear by surrendering to him? He has shown us his faithfulness and character. Do we think that once we submit to him that he will suddenly change? God is **good**. It is a simple but profound truth. His character is good, and all that he does is good. We may not always understand his ways, and they are not always easy, but they are good. What, then, should our response be but to fall at his feet in surrender.

Jesus clearly calls us to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow him. So why do so few of us actually follow in his footsteps? I believe it is fear. The call to submission that Jesus makes of us is actually the call to come to him and die. Die to self. Die to sin. Die to the hold that our enemies – our fleshly sinful nature, cultural pressures and Satan – have on us.

This road to sanctification and becoming like Jesus is a long and painful one, but the fruit that it yields is beautiful. It is the means by which the character of God is created and matured in us. It is a voluntary, willing submission to God's taking control over every area of our lives that produces peace, freedom and healing. I am discovering the peculiar reality that the more I submit and let him transform me, the more I am becoming myself – the unique daughter that God has created me to be.

Jesus calls out for us to trust him and relinquish control. His challenging offer in return is abundant life through our death to self. How will we answer him?