



Summer Family Reunion (Part 3)

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Ted Cunningham is one in a million, maybe one in a thousand, I don't know. When I went to Dallas Seminary, I heard a little bit about Ted and went to Dallas seminary not just because of Ted, but while I was there, I certainly was following in his footsteps. He's always been a little bit ahead of me in ministry and I count him as a real mentor and a friend as well.

I went to Dallas Seminary and I went to study theology, but I ended up meeting this girl and started studying her. We have been married now for 20 years. My wife Jenny is here today. I'm so glad you are here, Babe.

Our two oldest kids are here. Lucy is 17, Jake is 15 and we have three other kids that are here in Branson as well with us. We drove in yesterday from Atlanta, Georgia. That is not a short drive. Some of you maybe have driven that drive before and wow, I don't know how you feel today, I slept pretty good last night, but I still feel a bit exhausted.

But I'm not alone. Anybody else feel exhausted? It's amazing that this is common in life right now. A lot of people are feeling tired. I don't know what it is. I was telling a good friend of mine about it. I was like "I'm so tired... He sent me this podcast. I don't know if any of you are

podcasters, but it's a podcast called the *Huberman Lab*. If you've never heard of it before, I can't necessarily recommend it, but this particular episode... The title of it was *What is your nuclear sleep stack?* Some of you are like "I don't know what that means" And it's because you are a normal human, that's why. I'm just learning normal people do not have a sleep stack, but this is one of those podcasts where 10 minutes in I was both fascinated and evaluating everything in my life and worrying that the coffee that I had at 1:30pm was going to kill me because this thing was detailed on how to get good sleep.

Here's some of the the things it said. I mean how to get good sleep; you have to have everything.

The nuclear sleep stack that they include had everything in it. it had magnesium before bed, it had blackout curtains, it had white noise, it had red lightbulbs, it had a cooling mattress... I don't know about that.

It had sleep gummies. Some of you are like oh, gummies, I'm into those. Nope... a different kind of gummies. It had melatonin. And then it had brown noise at a particular... it gave the frequency of brown noise that it was recommending. It also included... and I kid you not, a military grade fan pointed directly at your face at 43 miles per hour for wind.

Some of you are like yeah, that sounds perfect. If you don't have a sleep stack, it might be because you have little kids. A sleepstack for me is did I step on a Lego on the way to the bathroom at 2:am.

And then some of you maybe have trouble sleeping. I get it. The older I get, the more I realize sleeping is just not easy. When I was 25, I could sleep through a tornado, now the older I get, somebody opens a yogurt in the kitchen and I'm awake through the rest of the day. That is all that it takes for me.

I'm definitely trying to limit the number of times that I use the bathroom in the middle of night. That's the new thing for me. and I'm hoping that I can get up out of bed without pulling a hamstring, because that's an embarrassing thing, right?

But as I was listening to this podcast, I did think, *okay, maybe there's more to our problem than just physical exhaustion. Maybe our soul's are exhausted, maybe our spirit is exhausted.* Maybe life is just heavy. The truth is it is heavy. Let me just start with this simple, little phrase. It's not just that life is full, it's that life does feel heavy. And maybe that's your circumstances today.

Maybe, today, you just have a lot on your plate, you've got a lot of people's expectations that you are carrying. You've got a lot of internal pressure, maybe you even have some external pressure.

Today, I believe, is filled with good news. The gospel of Jesus translated is the good news that following Jesus it's not simple and it's certainly not easy, but it is filled with good news.

So, if you are a church person, today, I hope today will be lifechanging. If you are not a church person and you're here today, someone invited you to woodland hills, we are so glad you're here. If you love today, great. If you don't love today, I'm not going to be preaching next week so there's some good news for you, right?

But I have a mentor who would confidently tell me, "Do not dare stand in front of people holding up the word of God and not expect that there is life change on the horizon. That God might just want to change something about our lives. And so, I definitely believe that today, I believe that sitting in the seat that you are sitting in right now, that your whole life can change today, because this passage that we are

going to look at in Matthew 11... if you have a bible, you can turn there. We are going to put the words on the screen.

This passage is one of the richest, one of the most powerful passages. This is one of those passages that when Ted and I took preaching classes at Dallas theological Seminary this, is one of those passages where they would give it to you and go, "hey if you can't preach this one, you probably should go find a new line of work.

This is one of the most powerful statements that Jesus said. Here's the Jest of it. Jesus is going to tell us today, "Hey, my burden is light. If you feel heavy, if you feel weighed down, I've got good news. I've got a burden that is not overbearing. I've got a burden that is not difficult for you to carry. I've got a burden that is possible for you to experience relief and rest in this life.

But there's a flip side to all of this and that is that potentially, you and I are carrying something that was not ours to carry. Have you ever had that epiphany that maybe there are some expectations that you feel, some pressure that you feel, a heaviness, a weightiness that you feel that is potentially not yours to carry? There is the potential that you are carrying something that you are not equipped for, that you do not have the ability to handle, and no one has even asked you to carry. In fact, a lot of us are carrying things that God never asked us to carry. I genuinely believe if the almighty God stepped down into this room, into this church, into our present lives today, he would go, Who asked you to carry that? I didn't. I never asked you to carry the weight of your entire family, the expectations of your parents, the expectations of your kids. I never asked you to carry the weight and the pressure of comparison on social media. I never asked you to carry all that. Why do you think that you can carry that. No wonder you are exhausted. No wonder you are so tired. And it's not just physical, it's a deep fatigue. And the hardest part of all of this is not just that we are

potentially carrying something that we are not even supposed to carry, that no one even asked us to carry, but here's the most tragic part of this conversation. Too many of us are carrying it alone.

Let me just tell you, if that's you today, if you feel like, wow, Jesus gets me. God gets me yes, I feel tired, but I don't think I could say it. I wouldn't dare speak it out loud. I wouldn't dare tell anyone about it because I wouldn't want anybody to think that I'm complaining or I wouldn't want anyone to think that I'm not grateful for my life because I am grateful and I don't want to come across as an ungrateful person.

I'm grateful and I'm happy, I'm glad, okay, it's good, but I'm exhausted and I don't know who to turn to, I don't know what to do and maybe, potentially, you are carrying this alone.

For my own life, this is what I'm learning. This is what I feel like God is teaching me is that the weight that I feel isn't just life, it's how we are doing life. And this is my hope today... I hope that God might give you radical peace, radical rest, radical transformation, and I believe that God can do it without all of your circumstances changing. The crazy around you...is probably still going to be crazy. The family dynamics are probably still going to be complicated. Some of the more difficult aspects of our life are probably not getting less complex. But I believe Jesus is inviting us into a new way of living today, one that is filled with his peace and his rest.

I'm telling you, the promise today is significant.

I want to look at this passage in Matthew 11: 28-30. If you've been around church, you've heard these words before, but I want to just stop at a couple different places and try to allow God to open up our eyes to really see what Jesus is trying to tell us. And to see what this

invitation is that he's inviting us into. Look at the way this passage begins.

It starts with these three words that are so powerful. He says, "Come to me." he says come to me. Jesus *is* the invitation. He says, whatever you are feeling, whatever you are experiencing, however you've come in here, do not just come to a group of people, do not just come to an ideology, do not just come to the church, no He says "Come to Me" He says "I am all of that."

The good news is he doesn't give us three other words that we ought to have to figure out, which is maybe fix your life. Get cleaned up. Stop being stupid. He doesn't say that. he doesn't say, "Go figure it out for yourself and then come to me." He says, "Hey, listen, just as you are, with your scars, with your hurt, with your brokenness. He says, "I love you just as you are right now and you can come to me." I don't know of a more powerful invitation than that. he says, "I'm inviting you no matter who you are, no matter where you are, come to me."

And then we move on to him describing who he's talking to and you would think that he said these words in 2026. You read these words and you are like, well that is how I feel today. did they really feel this way 2000 years ago when he stood on earth and said these words to his closest followers? Evidently so, which is baffling because this is before internet, before the i phone, before Chat GP whatever, where you are asking all your questions to that you don't want to tell anybody you are asking. He's going, Before all that, people were still tired. People were still exhausted.

Look at what he says. He says, "come to me all of ye, but in this case, he says, Come to me all of you who are weary and burdened." If you feel weary, if you feel burdened, the invitation is for you. and these aren't the same two things. He's not just using the same two words or

two slightly different words just for emphasis. No, these mean two different things. Weary represents all of the things that we do to ourselves. Do you have anybody in your family that complains about being busy? And you want so badly to tell them, “Stop complaining, you did this to yourself.”

I am that person and certainly I’m that person in my marriage. I’ll complain to my wife about being busy and she will look at me like, “Are you crazy? You did this to yourself. You said yes to all this stuff.” And it’s true. I am a people pleaser. I say yes to things that I don’t have any business doing. I said yes to something last week that I don’t even want to do. I don’t know what you know about panels. Not like panels on the wall. I would never say yes to that But I got invited to sit on this panel at this conference. And I’m not really a big panel guy. I do a lot of public speaking; I do a lot of corporate speaking to businesses and for prophets and non-prophets and churches and I love doing that.

But sitting on a panel is a difficult thing for me. Somebody extended this invitation and asked me to be a part of this panel. On top of that, I don’t really have time to go do this. But what came out of my mouth was different than the way I felt because I said “Yes, I would love to”

Have you ever had one of those moments where the words come out and you find yourself trying to go grab them and put them back in?

First of all, there are two lives to that. Number one, I said yes, which is not really how I felt and then two, I said I’d would love to? I don’t even want to do it. I don’t even like panels, I didn’t want to be at your dumb conference. But I said yes to it. And do you know whose fault that is? That is my fault.

So, weariness is those things we say yes to that pile up on us that keep us busy. So often, we wear that business as a badge, and it causes us to be exhausted.

Burden is different. Burden represents those things in life that you didn't necessarily take on. You didn't say to this. Usually, it's because someone else was carrying responsibility and they laid it down. They didn't want to carry it anymore. They became irresponsible and somebody had to pick up their responsibility, and so now all of a sudden, you are taking care of kids that are not your own kids. You're mowing someone's lawn that's not even your own yard. You're handling somebody else's business that's not even your business. And you feel burdened because life is stacked up on top of you and maybe you're that person in the family. Everybody has one. It's that person in the family that everybody depends on, that everybody relies on, expecting you to pay for everything, expecting you to schedule everything, expecting you to handle all the details of everything. and then when something goes wrong, they blame you for it. And you feel burdened. And understandably so. And Jesus says, "to you, "Whether you are weary or whether you are burdened, he says, come to me." maybe you're taking care of somebody because they are sick. Maybe you are having to pay for somebody else's financial collapse. Life feels heavy.

The invitation is for you. he says, "Come to me all of you who feel weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Some of you are like, "Does it come in the form of a Sunday afternoon nap? Hallelujah, say less, amen... preach it some of you are like I'd like to have one of those.

But here's the thing... I believe he is not just talking about he will allow you to sleep, he will allow you to take a nap. This is not just about physical rest, this is about rest for your soul. How do we know that? Because he is going to reiterate that in just a second. But before he

gets to the promise of all this, he says, “I want to introduce you to a Medi fore. And I feel a little insecure as the one trying to explain this metaphor. Those of you that know this passage and you know where this is going, what is he about to say? He is about to say, “Get up under, take up my yoke.”

Now, do any of you have farm animals right now, or did you grow up on a farm? So I feel really insecure talking about this in front of you because if you find me in a Bass Pro shop, I will be glad to be there, but I will have been kidnapped. I do not really do the outdoors, I get to a restaurant and they are like would you like to sit indoors or outdoors and I would be like, “Have y’all figured out how to condition the outdoor air. You haven’t yet? Then we’ll take the one that is conditioned. We will take the indoor air. I am avid indoors man. I love it on the inside. I love it on the inside.

We have an 11-year-old son who is really passionate... I don’t know where he got this because he did not get it from me. but he is really passionate about chickens. He has been begging us for a year to own some chickens. My wife and, we really believe the Bible and we try to live our life according to the Bible and that little illustration that Jesus gives where he talks about that woman, the neighbor that just kept beating on the door. And finally, the homeowner opened up the door? That was us.

He beat on that door so long that we finally relented and we said, “Okay, if you want to get chickens, you can get some chickens. I told him this... I don’t’ really know where I got this, but I was like Hey, I do not want to be the one taking care of these chickens.

So, I told him. “You’ve got to figure out how to deal with these chickens, you are going to have to pay for these chickens, and you’re going to have to be the one to raise these chickens.” And then I said

this... And this is a little cruel, but I meant it. I said, "I don't even want to make eye contact with these chickens. Now that's next level, right

But I felt it. As soon as I said it, I was like now that's something I believe in. I don't want them to look at me and I do not want to look at them. I don't want them longingly looking into my eyes being like Can you hook me up with something? Because I'm going to be like No, I told your owner it is his job, right, it is not my job. This is not yoke right here, this is for real.

The only time I've ever seen a yoke is on the wall at cracker Barrel. I am not the one to be explaining... I don't want to deal with the outdoor stuff. That's just me, that's the way God made me, I'm going to have to deal with it.

The way a yoke works, you know this, particularly those who either grew up on a farm or maybe you have some stuff now.

It is a mechanism; it's a tool that we use to be able to get more accomplished because you can take an older animal and partner it with younger animals. You can take a strong animal and partner it with a less strong animal. You take a democrat and partner them up with a Republican up with a Republican animal, and they can accomplish great things. You can partner them up together and it's the thing where two plus two is not just four, it's two plus two equals a whole lot more. It's that saying, that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. That's what the yoke allows the animals to do. So, Jesus was saying, "Take my yoke upon you."

But there is another level to this because every rabbi in this day and age would have had his own yoke. Every Rabbi would have had his own standards and requirements and expectations of his teaching. And they would have worn it with a sense of pride, like yea, I have high

expectations for my followers. I'm a Rabbi that is tough. I'm fair, but I'm tough. It's like one of those personal trainers. It's like, 'Yeah, I can help work you out but, you are going to be exhausted because I got hard workouts

And some of you are like me and you're like, "Where is the 8-minute version of that one. But in Jesus's case, he goes, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, but because my yoke is different. No Rabbi would have defined or described himself in this way, but Jesus says, "I am gentle and I am humble, in heart. I have a gentle way and I'm humble in heart. I don't Lord my power over you. I don't Lord my authority over you.

Come and take up my Yoke, learn from me for I am gentle and humble at heart. And then look at this promise... And you will find... there's that word again. Rest. But he defines it this time. He says I don't just mean physical rest, I mean rest for your soul. You interested in that? This is such good news that he says, Hey, the rat race, the exhaustion of life, the way your life is headed, it's going to kill you. it's going to destroy you, it's going to suck the life out of you. Particularly if you are putting yourself up under someone else's

Here's the hard thing about all of this. You are currently under another yoke that was not meant for you. Do I know that? Because that's every one of us and that that's certainly me.

About five years ago, I resigned from my job as a pastor at a church and it was one of the hardest, most gut wrenching, soul crushing, decisions that I had ever had to make. But what led up to it was I was working at a church that... the culture of this church was great, but it was an up and to the right kind of culture, where everything always had to be growing. And that's just not the way life works. Life is not always up and to the right. and the pressure of that... When I put myself up

under that yoke, it was doing harm to me, it was not good for me. How do I know what? Well because I had four close friends that showed up at my house to do what I call an intervention. Now, I was not on drugs and I was not overusing alcohol, but they showed up at my house... Whenever someone shows up at your house and you are the reason, they are there, it felt like an intervention to me.

They looked at me and they said, "Hey we are worried about you. We're worried that your soul is not in a good place. And truthfully, I felt loved, but I didn't want to listen to what they were saying. I was like, "Why are you here? What's your problem? What do you think my issue is?

And they were like, the way you're responding right now, mainly. You're defensiveness, your inability to talk about this. You're unwillingness to look inside and figure out what really is going on.

I had a professional coach that I was meeting with at the time. I'm not smart enough to ask myself all the right questions that you need to be able to ask for you to get where you need to be in life, so I would meet with this coach once a month and he would just ask me great questions. One day, he was like, Clay, it seems to me that your friends were trying to tell you that it might be time, it's been 20 years, it might have been your dream job, but it might not be the right job the right job anymore. Maybe you need to quit. I was like I don't like the idea of quitting.

He was like, why do you not like the idea of quitting? He said what do you have against quitting" I said, I don't have anything against quitting, but my dad does, but my dad does.

Then he was like, Let's talk about it. Now, listen, I have a father who is one of the best men that I know. He's a tremendous person, but one of his leading attributes of life, particularly of character, is you stay when things get hard. And you do not quit. So, I realized that I had taken on this yoke that told me that quitting meant failure. And that's not even what my dad would have meant, but that's what I had ascribed to. It was another yoke that I was up under that was not necessarily the right one or me in that moment. It's not like I had been there three months or six months. I had been there 20 years. My wife and I, during that season of life, went on 100 walks. We would just walk around our neighborhood and talk. Our kids were really young back then. Have you ever talked with your spouse so much or complain about something so much that they are like, I'm tired of hearing this. She was so Patient and she rarely got to that point, but every now and then she would say, "Have you thought about talking to a counselor about this because she was right. and I did, I eventually went to see a counselor and tried to talk it all through. Eventually I got to the point where I realized that I had had taken on something, I had taken on expectations and pressures that were not mine to carry and that were not good for me. And it was through that season of my life that I learned more than ever what it looked like to come to Jesus. I had to have a come to Jesus, meeting with myself. And maybe, just maybe that's you today. it's not about career. The application today is not go quit your job. Though some of you might need to do that, I don't know. Its not, Oh, this person I've been married to is a ball and chain and this ain't working out. That's not what it's about.

I'm telling you today, Marriage, Parenting, career, they are all just ways that God uses what's going on in our life to try to grow us and sanctify us. And ultimately bring us to him. God used my career to drive me to him. It was a come to Jesus conversation, it was a com to Jesus moment. Today, that invitation is here for you. Here's the promise

if you'll do it. Here's what he says, Look at this last thing. The is verse 30. He said, For my yoke is easy and my burden mis light.

Now, this doesn't mean easy, simple. This doesn't make easy light Like you'll never have to do anything, you'll never have to work again, you'll never have to figure anything out, No. He's just saying that if you get under his yoke, it's Taylor made for you. It's perfect for you. t's the way you were designed to life.

Those of you who are into Bible trivia, question for you. Do you remember what Jesus' profession was? Yeah, he was a carpenter. He built things with his hands. He probably worked with his dad and had a carpenter shop

I remember when I was reading this the other day, I was looking at it going, "This feels like something you would hang on the wall of a carpenter shop. Do you think Jesus ever made a Yoke? I'll bet he did. And I bet he would have told a customer Listen; the Yokes we build are not like any other yokes. They are perfect for you. They are easy, and they have this burden about them that's just light. And if you get up under it you get to experience that

So, let me ask you just two questions before we close this thing out today, these are not just questions that I came up with just to try to finish the sermon. I genuinely want you to think about these. I want you to spend some time processing these, doing a little introspection. For some of you, you won't need any time. You'll immediately know the answer to it. but others of you might need to dwell on this, meditate on it, and spend some time thinking about it. Maybe one morning this week, when you woke up for the fourth time to use the bathroom in the middle of the night. Ask this question, what are you carrying that was not meant for you to carry. What is the yoke that you are carrying that you were not meant to carry. Usually, it is in the form

of an expectation from someone else. Usually, it comes in the form of some kind of internal pressure you are putting on yourself. Or some kind of external pressure that you feel like maybe somebody is putting on you. and it's not their fault. You've got to figure out what it is, you have to identify it. What is the yoke that I put myself under. What is the thing that I'm carrying that was not meant for me to carry. Then secondly, what specifically would it look like for you to come to Jesus.

This was the hardest part of preparing for this message today. I wanted so specifically to go, and here's what you need to do. This is what come to me looks like for every single one of you. But the truth is I don't know. I don't know your specifics, I don't know the complexities of your life. I don't know what makes your world so complicated. I don't know exactly what it looks like for you at 6:47 on a Tuesday morning to come to Jesus. But if you will ask him, I bet he'd love to show you. If you'll ask him, I bet he would love to help you with that.

So, what does it mean specifically? Would you spend some time thinking about that. Write some things down, what does it look like for you to come to Him on a moment by moment, daily basis?

Jesus is offering us an upgrade today. He's offering us something way better than what we are currently experiencing. I deeply believe your best life is on the other side of your willingness to come to him.

He's going, hey, I got a trade for you. Would you be willing to trade your exhaustion for his rest? Would you be willing to trade your pressure for his presence

Would you be willing to trade your weight for his yoke? The opportunity is on the table. The ball is in your court as they say. What are you going to do. Would you be willing to just say yes to his

invitation. Would you be willing to come to him? The good news isn't that life gets lighter. Anybody feel like life is slowing down or is it picking up?

Is it getting less complicated or more complicated. Those of you with kids, is life getting less expensive or more expensive. Some of you in the whole time I've been talking have been thinking about the price of eggs. Life is not slowing down, it's not getting easier, it's not getting lighter. But he tells you if you come to him, you don't have to carry it alone. If you'll come to him, he's saying hey come on, I know you're weary, I know you're burdened, come to me, I want to give you rest for your soul.

Father, we need you. We invite you just like you have invited us. Help us to see what it is that is burdening us, weighing us down.

Father, would you give us the courage, the willingness to say yes to you, not just on a Sunday morning, but even throughout this week, in those quiet moments and the busy moments and the moments where we feel like we are about to pull our hair out, give us the ability to say yes to you. show us what it looks like in real tangible ways, show us what it looks like to come to you

Father, for the person who really is weary, the person who really is burdened, where they feel like they can't even believe they made it here today, just give them a sense of your presence right here right now. That you are with us, that you are with him, you are with her, now.

And father, more than anything, I pray that you would allow us to trust you. There is not one we can trust in that is better than you. so, we

trust in you, almighty God. Jesus, son of God. Sprit of God, we trust in you. and we pray all this in Jesus name... Amen