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The Cure for Burnout

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Series: Preach
Matthew 11:28-30

BIG IDEA - FOUR KEYS THAT HELP US TAKE HEAVY WORK AND UNLOCK LIGHT WORK

Let me start by saying what a joy and privilege it is every time I get to preach to you guys. It's such an honor to preach to my church family. Also, men of Butner, this is my first time preaching to you guys. It's an honor. Welcome to our church family. I want to let you in on how I arrived at what we're going to be talking about today before I tell you what we're going to be talking about today.

Normally, when I preach here, we're in the middle of a sermon series. It's like, "We're in Romans 2. Preach Romans 2." No decision to be made. "Okay, great. Got it." But this time, we're in the *Preach* series, and the prompt was "Preach whatever you want to about anything in the entire universe." I was stumped. I had nothing. So, I did what I normally do when I don't know what else to do. I asked my wife what she thought I should do. True story. She has great ideas. (Wow, some claps for that. That's great.)

She said, "Well, why don't you lean into what's so unique about you?" I'm like, "Okay. I like this. What is that?" She said, "Well, what's so unique about you is you're just a normal person like everybody else." I was like, "Hold on. First of all, I'm not sure that's the definition of *unique*. Second of all, I'm not sure this makes me feel great."

I'm kind of kidding, but she said, "You're a normal person working a normal job in corporate America like everybody else, and that's unique because everyone else who preaches at Two Cities works in full-time ministry for the church. So, why don't you preach about work from this perspective as someone who works for a big, normal company out there?" So, this is what we're going to do today. We're talking about work.

For those of you who don't know (I'm not sure why you *would* know this), I work for a bank. It's a normal bank. It's a good bank, but it's what you think it is. I have a manager. He's great, by the way. He has a manager. *He* has a manager…all the way up. We have an HR department. It's what you think it is. For context, my wife works outside the home as well. We have three little kids. There's a lot going on. So, today I'm going to take this perspective and the Word of God, and we're going to talk about work.

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and turn or type to Matthew 11:28-30. This is a very common passage. This is Jesus speaking. It's so short I'm just going to read the whole thing for us as we start, and then we'll work our way back through it. Very famously, Jesus says this. Gospel call. ***"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."***

If you've ever heard a sermon on this passage before, it probably wasn't about your job. You probably heard some version of "You don't need to work for your salvation. Jesus Christ has already done everything necessary to save you, and you can rest in the completed work of Christ." Some version of this.

That's the spiritual version. It's totally correct. But here is what we're going to do today. We're going to take this text and use it as a lens to look through toward our work and see if there's anything, by implication or application, that we could use *in* our work. You're like, "My job?" Yes, your job, but not *just* your job, because people are working on all kinds of things.

Students, I know it's summer now, but when class is in session, are you weary and heavy laden? Good. This could be helpful for that. Or stay-at-home mom, are you weary and stressed in *your* work? A lot of you are. And this makes sense. Can we all agree on something right at the start here?

Like, stay-at-home mom… This is kind of the hardest job possible. I mean, it's a very meaningful job, but it's work. No job I'm aware of has worse hours. The pay is so bad. It's negative pay. Your kids take all your money. This is how much it pays. It's meaningful, but it's work.

Maybe you're in a life stage where you're caring for aging parents or helping out with the grandkids. That's all work. Maybe you're a young person working hard on your sports, house projects, side hustles, job hunting. People are working on all kinds of things, and we can tend to get very weary, heavy laden, and stressed out by all of it.

So, if you're a person who is weary in your work, good news today. Let's hear the call of Christ. Let's read this again. Verse 28: ***"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy***

laden…" The NIV says, "Come to me if you're weary and burdened." ***"…and I will give you rest."*** For so many of us, it's like, "Yes, Lord. I'm working my tail off. Let's rest. Where are we going? The beach?"

Verse 29: ***"Take my yoke upon you…"*** A *yoke* is a tool they put on the neck of an ox so it can pull a plow. It's a tool for work. It's like, "Jesus, wait. Hold on. I thought you said, 'Come to me if you're weary and we can rest.' Why are you putting this yoke on my neck?" This feels weird. Right? It's almost like Jesus is saying, "If you're weary, come to me to rest, and now let's go to work." It's strange. Right? Just an honest reading.

Actually, this is exactly what he's saying. The call to rest is simultaneously a call to work. It feels strange until we realize Jesus is letting us in on a little secret. People are not weary because they're working; they're weary because they're working all wrong. Jesus isn't going to take work away from those of us who are weary; he's going to give us a new way to do it. I think we're going to find that he gives us four keys today that are going to help us take heavy work and unlock light work.

The first key is found in the yoke itself. Let's talk about a yoke. In the ancient world, at the time of Christ, they would put a double yoke on the neck of two different oxen, often an older, more mature, stronger ox with a weaker, less mature ox to teach the weaker one how to pull. That's why Jesus is saying, "Take my yoke on you." This is a double yoke. It's a tool for partnership.

So, the first key to unlocking light work is to *pull with a partner*, namely Christ. We need to pull with a partner. Why are you weary in your work? Well, for so many of you, it's because you're trying to pull the plow of your career, your family, and all of your other responsibilities by yourself. You're not in a double yoke; you're in a single yoke. I'm going to call this the *yoke of indispensability*, because you think you're indispensable, like it's all up to you.

Successful professionals really struggle with this, the yoke of indispensability. It's kind of this mindset of "Oh, this place is going to fall apart without me." It's the checking email right before bed and right when you wake up, having trouble delegating, missing family events you maybe should be at, or maybe you're *at* the event but are on your phone or in your head half the time. Successful professionals struggle with the yoke of indispensability.

Do you know who else struggles with this? A lot of moms. For so many of you moms, raising and discipling your kids is your life's work. You feel very deeply called to this. That's great. There's nothing wrong with this. It's very meaningful work to give your life

to. But so many of you feel weary a lot of the time, and a lot of the reason why is because you're wearing a yoke of indispensability.

You think it's all up to you, like you're the only one who knows how to do it. No babysitter is good enough. No school teacher is good enough. Your husband tries to help, but he doesn't really know how to do it. Right? It comes from a good place. I get it. It comes from a good place. You're like, "If I don't control every aspect of my kid's environment, the danger out there is going to get them." Or the greatest danger… "The sin out there is going to get them." You're overwhelmed by this. This makes total sense.

Weary moms, I actually have bad news and good news for you. Bad news first. You are not able to create an environment safe enough to save your kids from all the sin out there, because the sin isn't just out there; it's already inside them. They're already infected. You can't handle that job on your own. The job of separating the sin from the soul of your child? You need a powerful partner for this. Good news: Jesus Christ is a willing, powerful partner.

So, you need to do your part and keep doing what you're doing, but at the same time realize the only one who has the power to save your kids is in the other half of the yoke, pulling alongside you, because that yoke of indispensability just makes work burdensome, in so many ways, for so many people.

For me, last year I made this stupid mistake where I lost some money. Not like a catastrophic amount of money, but not an insignificant amount of money. Your imagination is going, so I need to tell you what happened. I wasn't gambling. Okay? Basically, I forgot to change something in my company's 401(k) system and forfeited almost all of the match benefits for the year. I have a pretty generous company. It was a pretty good amount of money.

So, I go to my HR people about this. I'm like, "Surely we can fix this. Right?" and they're like, "Oh, no. There's nothing we can do about this." *Err!* Wrong answer. "No, guys. Surely we can fix this. Right?" So, I went on the warpath for a few months. I was wearing them out for months trying to get this resolved. Eventually, they were so sick of me, our head of benefits ended up telling me, "If you'd like to keep going down this path, you can file a formal complaint per policy with our chief HR officer."

I don't know that person, so this is the end of the road. I file a formal complaint per policy. I write a perfect letter, print it out, sign it, and mail it through the physical mail to our chief HR officer. Do you know what happened? It was so crazy. Do you think I got the money? No, of course not. I got an even longer letter back from external legal counsel whom they had hired to keep arguing with me about why they weren't going to pay me. I

was losing my mind. I'm like, "Oh my goodness. You'd rather pay an attorney $500 an hour to argue with me than just pay me?" I was going nuts.

Okay. Why do I give you all this detail? Because I'm trying to explain what it feels like when you're striving and straining and pulling on your own. I was losing my mind. But in the end, I kind of took the hint. The money was gone. I had this profound experience at the end of all this where I had just put my son to bed, our 4-year-old son in his little Thomas the Train bed.

I'm standing in the doorway of his room. He's sleeping. I'm just beating myself up in my head, dwelling on it. "I'm supposed to take care of my family financially. I just blew it. I can't fix it." Then I sensed the Lord say to me, "You think *you* take care of your family? *I* take care of your family." That is the invitation of the shared yoke.

It's like, "Yes, you do need to do your part, but get over here. Get in this thing with me. It's going to be okay. Let's keep going. I've got you." In accepting that, I could let my soul rest and move on. All of us in all our work need to pull with a partner. In this image of the double yoke, *he's* the lead ox, not us. The lead ox does three things. He sets the path, he sets the pace, and he provides the power.

The lead ox sets the path. When you're yoked to Christ, the plow goes where he wants it to go. Sometimes that's the same place you want to go, but sometimes it isn't. He sets the path. So, if someone else gets the job you wanted and you're yoked to Christ, the only explanation is Jesus has a different field for you to plow. That's the only explanation.

Or, how about this? If you lose your job… And people are scared of this, especially right now with AI. Some of y'all are terrified that AI will replace the career you are working so hard to build. I'll just address it head-on. It *might*. I don't know. But watch this. It's powerful. If you lose your job and you're yoked to Christ, the only explanation is he has different work for you that you just don't know about yet. He's not going to pull you over a cliff. He's not like that.

Guys, I'm not trying to be flippant about this. This is actually real life for me. I lost my job in my 20s. I was fairly newly married, had a wife in grad school, and simultaneously, in an instant, found myself unemployed, broke, and driving my stick shift for Uber. I got introduced to myself in this season.

I don't have time to get all into it, but I didn't realize at the time that part of what the Lord was doing was leading my family and me out of Durham to Winston-Salem at just the right time so we could play a little part in helping this little church plant called *Two Cities Church*. He sets the path. Don't be scared. He knows where he's going. He's trustworthy.

The lead ox sets the path. He sets the pace. In this image, you can't run ahead of him, and he won't let you lag behind. You're yoked next to him. If things aren't happening at work as quickly as you'd like them to be happening, he's setting the pace a little more slowly. It's okay. Trust him.

Thirdly, he provides the power. This is amazing. I mean, what a benefit. What a gospel benefit. For the work God has called you to, he provides the majority of the power. Guys, this is a hack. This is such a benefit to being a Christian. I call this the *"I know God" hack*. I do this in my real life.

There will be this big business lunch I'm walking into (well, big for me), a deal hanging in the balance. I'm all nervous, like, "I hope they like me. I hope this goes well." I'm walking into this lunch, and then I do this as I'm walking in. I think this thought: "I know God. I know God."

Now, look. It doesn't mean I close the deal, necessarily, but watch this. A business lunch with a human being becomes the right size when you realize the God who made him *and* you is walking in there with you. This is Psalm 27:1. ***"…whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"*** This isn't just the power of positive thinking. No. This is the power of a supernatural partner in your work. That's what this is. All of us need to pull with a partner.

How do you do this practically? How do you partner with Christ in your work practically? I've kind of been implying it, but let me just be explicit and drive it home. Prayer. You have to be a person of prayer. Think about it. How do you partner with anybody in anything? You communicate…a lot. How do you communicate with God? Prayer. This is how you do it.

So, freaked-out parents who are freaked out about the sin you see growing in your kids… It's not how you raised them. You don't know what to do about it. Honestly, most of you don't need to read another parenting book. You need to wear the Lord out in prayer. Like, "God, I don't know what to do. Do something. Send someone into her life, Lord. If there's something for me to do or say, show me what it is. Change her heart." Transfer the burden to the Lord in prayer. This is how it becomes light.

Or, students or recent grads who are worried about what college, what grad program, or what job is next, trying so hard to be the best applicant you can be, transfer the burden of that to the Lord in prayer. "God, I'm working as hard as I can, but I leave the results to you. I leave it there." This is how the burden becomes light. All of us in all our work need to pull with a partner. That's the first key to unlocking light work.

The second key is to *leave lying voices*. There's something I need to explain that I haven't explained yet. The yoke you are wearing as you're going about your work has two components. The first is obvious. It's the *behavior*. It's the job. It's a set of activities you take on. It's the behavior. That's the first part of it. The second part, less obvious and probably more important, is *beliefs*.

You have beliefs that drive all of that behavior. You have beliefs fueling all of your work. Your beliefs are the work underneath the work. Your beliefs are the answer to the *why* question for you. Why are you working so hard? Well, your beliefs are the answer. Beliefs plus behavior equals the yoke you're wearing.

Here's a question…*Where do those beliefs come from?* Where do the beliefs that drive all the activity, all your work, come from? Do they come from thin air? No. They come from voices. They come from active agents selling to you a reason to work really hard. Jesus is one of those voices. He's saying, "Come to me. I'll give you a reason to work, and you'll find soul rest at the end of that."

But he's not the only one selling. He's the only one delivering on soul rest, but not the only one selling. No. There are a lot of other voices crying out to us all the time, selling to us bad reasons to work, but they are liars, and when we believe them, they produce soul fatigue in the end and not soul rest. There are a lot of these lying voices that we need to leave, but let's just talk about a couple of the main ones.

The first one is the *voice of appetite*. This voice says, "You are what you're able to experience. You are what you're able to buy for yourself." This voice says, "Come to me, work really hard, and at least at the end you'll have some money so you can go buy some rest for your soul." But this just makes the work so burdensome. By definition, this makes the work a burden to be endured, a means to an end. It's just working for a paycheck. It's not light work.

Then, in the end it gets worse, because you realize you can't buy rest for your soul anyway. Like, how many of you guys have had *this* experience? You get to the dream vacation. You just said yes to everything, everything the way you wanted it. "Yep. Yep. Yep." You're three days in, and you're like, "Is this it?" Uh-oh. Right?

Or, maybe some of you guys feel this in retirement. You believed this voice your whole career so you could retire early and have some fun, and you just did it. You just retired, and you're like, "Is this it?" Uh-oh. That voice is a liar. That can't be the only reason we work so hard. The voice of appetite is a liar. We have to leave it.

The second voice we need to leave is the *voice of approval*. This voice says, "You are who they say you are." When you believe that voice, it fuels the constant labor of managing

how others perceive you. You have to exceed their expectations of you if that's who you are, but it makes the work so burdensome for a lot of reasons. I mean, one of them is they change their minds all the time.

By the way, who's *they*? Are you trying to impress your parents, your kids, your college buddies, your coworkers? For some of you guys, it *is* your parents. It's Dad. You didn't really want to be a doctor, but he was like, "Oh, you can do it, honey. You're so smart." So you did it. You're a doctor, but you're kind of miserable at the same time.

You'd take that yoke off if you could, but you're scared you'll lose his approval. That was the belief fueling the behavior, and it breaks the whole thing down, so you just keep wearing that yoke. Parents, as an aside, let me say this. Let's be careful with the expectations we place on our kids. They're very powerful.

So, for some of you, it's your parents. For others of you, for a lot of us, it's the crowd. It's our peers and whatever social strata we find ourselves in. Check this out. This is wild. I was talking with a buddy of mine from college a few months ago, and this guy is by far the most successful person I know from college. Like, we would not bump into each other in the real world today. We finished growing up together, so that's how I know him.

He's out in Silicon Valley. He has helped build and sell a couple of companies to companies you've heard of. He's a CEO of another company right now. He's so successful. He was on a *Forbes* 30 Under 30 list for consumer tech in his 20s. Not Winston-Salem 30 Under 30…*Forbes*. I mean, this guy is very successful.

But he was telling me a couple of months ago… Watch this. It's crazy. He was like, "In my 20s," as his star was rapidly ascending… He was like, "I felt like a failure." I was like, "What? How is *this* possible?" Here's how. He said, "In the little world I was in in Silicon Valley, I was looking to my right and was jealous of the guys doing even better than me."

The funny thing about the voice of approval is no matter where you are on the spectrum, you can look to the right and feel bad about yourself or look to your left and feel good about yourself. It's all relative to the people you surround yourself with. The target keeps moving.

So, go ahead. Do whatever you do to impress people…new clothes, nicer car, bigger house, nicer neighborhood, country club…whatever you do. Whenever you make any of those decisions, the target is just going to move again, and even if you impress those people, you're not going to impress them to the point that puts your soul at rest. This voice is a liar.

There are other lying voices giving us bad reasons to work. I don't have time to get into them all. We just need to know that in the end they produce soul fatigue and not soul rest. But it's not just about leaving the lying voices; it's about following the right voice, the voice of Christ. So, what's *his* voice saying? Let's read this. Verse 29: ***"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me…"*** That's the third key.

The third thing we need to do is *learn from the Lord*. Jesus is basically saying here, "Hey, be my apprentice. Watch how I do this and just do the same thing." That's a great way to learn. Okay. What should we learn from him? Well, he says two things right afterward. He says, ***"…for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*** So, maybe we should try to do those two things: be gentle and lowly like he is.

Let's talk about gentleness. First of all, let's define the terms. Gentleness is not weakness (a common misconception). I mean, how can it be? The image here is of a powerful ox pulling a massive amount of weight. *Gentle* definitely doesn't mean weak. No. Biblical gentleness is power under control, strength under control, strength without belligerence.

Now, look. In my world at the bank (and I'm sure it's true for a lot of y'all), there's a lot of the exact opposite happening. People think they need to use pressure tactics in corporate America. They think they need to be hard to be effective. It *can* be effective short term, but that's actually, typically, ineffective long term. It's definitely ineffective if you want to have any friends left at the top of the mountain.

We've all seen these people. Yeah, he has the corner office, but no one is going in there to invite him out to drinks on Friday afternoon. You need to be gentle like Jesus, have power under control. I knew this one young woman, a smart girl, just starting out in her career as an attorney in her mid-20s. This exact thing was happening to her, the pressure tactics thing. It was brutal.

So, on the other end of this phone call she was on, there was an older male attorney who was doing the older male intimidation tactics thing, saying a lot of words forcefully, trying to get a rise out of her…this whole thing. You guys have seen this, I'm sure. She was just kind of sitting there to the point where it was becoming awkward. He had to keep filling the space he was creating with his noise, and she just sat there. No real reaction.

He eventually just stopped, and it was awkward. She said, "Okay. Are you done?" Then she calmly disagreed with pretty much everything he had just said. Power under control. I'm married to that woman, by the way. True story. That was my wife. Yeah. Not a lot of arguing happens in my house, guys. I mean, what's the point? But in all seriousness, she's great.

Power under control. Does power under control describe how you go about your work? When it's another day of fire drill after fire drill, is it "Everybody steer clear of Sally; she's losing her mind in her office" or do you still have strength under control? Or, leaders, managers, when someone on your team isn't performing, do you dig in calmly and help them, have strength under control, or do you avoid them and whine on the side to their peers? That's weakness and a lack of control.

Or, parents, when it's another power struggle with little Johnny, is it strength under control or do you elevate the temperature to the point where you scare him back into submission? Short-term result, bad long-term result. The first thing we need to do is be gentle like Jesus. The second thing he wants us to learn from him is to be lowly or humble. It's the same word. We need to be humble like Jesus.

Again, in my world, and I'm sure in a lot of y'all's world, there's a lot of the exact opposite happening. Successful professionals kind of exude this self-made pride. They try to be covert about it, but it's so obvious. They're like, "Yeah, I'm definitely the type of person who would get to this type of place because I'm so [whatever]." They have this air of pride about them.

You'll see this all the time in sports. I'm a sports guy. It kind of cracks me up. There will be this postgame interview where some guy just had a big career night. They stick a microphone in his face, sold-out arena, national TV, and he says something like this. It's ridiculous. He's like, "Oh, this is such a humbling experience for me." I'm like, "What? The guy you just dunked on had a humbling experience. I don't know if *you're* humbled."

He's like, "Yeah, you know, just to be as gifted as I am. I'm so good at basketball. I'm so humbled by it." I'm being facetious, but they say things kind of like this. It's totally ridiculous. I'm like, "Yeah, you're good at basketball, but not so much your command of the English language."

Or how about this? Shonda Rhimes. Have you heard of this person? She's this big TV producer…*Bridgerton*, *Grey's Anatomy*. At least she just came right out and said it. I'll give her credit for coming right out and saying it. Here's what she said. This is a quote. She said, "I'm not lucky. Do you know what I am? I'm smart. I'm talented. I work really, really hard. Don't call me lucky."

"Well, yeah. Okay. You didn't do nothing, but you did get *some* help. I mean, you take credit for being smart, but did you make your brain? You got some help with the creation of your brain. Your intellect… Was that all you or did you get some help with that?" Guys, I'm making fun of it because it's completely ridiculous.

The reality is pride makes work heavy. It makes your work feel heavy for two reasons, actually. The first is it takes a lot of extra emotional energy to do the same work. Think about it. If you stop working out of pride, trying to impress other people, wouldn't that save you a lot of emotional energy? You take yourself too seriously. You wear yourself out. Pride takes all the joy, all the fun out of the work. Humility, on the other hand, is like a labor-saving device in this way.

So, pride takes a lot of extra emotional energy, and secondly, it makes work feel heavy because it introduces a powerful opponent to your work. Someone starts working against you. His name is God. I'm not trying to be extra intense. It's just biblical. Proverbs 3:34: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Do you want the Creator of the universe standing in front of you, pushing you as you try to work, or in the yoke next to you pulling alongside you? Pride is a guaranteed way to make your work feel very heavy. So, Jesus says, "You need to be gentle like me and be humble like me." We need to learn from the Lord in these two ways. That's the third key.

There's one more key for unlocking light work, and I love this one. It's so good. It's right here in verse 30. Verse 30 says, ***"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*** To understand this, we need to talk about the word *easy*. It doesn't carry over in modern English quite correctly. In the original language and context there are some undertones. It might better be translated "My yoke fits correctly."

Again, let's talk about the yoke. In the ancient world, they would often custom carve the yokes to fit the oxen that were going to wear them, because a poorly fitting yoke would cause unnecessary friction and even injure, give sores and blisters to these animals wearing it, but a custom carved yoke felt natural to the animal wearing it. In the same way, if your work is causing sores and blisters, so to speak, the fit might be wrong.

So, the fourth key is to *find your fit*. Guys, this is amazing. Jesus Christ has a custom yoke that he has designed just for you. You have a unique personality, unique opportunities, unique giftedness, and he has unique work he has prepared for you that he wants you to find. This is Ephesians 2:10. "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which he has prepared thoughtfully in advance, that we might find them and walk in them." It's a custom yoke, if you will.

So, here you go. Million-dollar question. "How do I find the custom yoke God has for me?" That's a good question. I'm glad you asked. I'm going to give us a very helpful tool, I think, from the late, great Tim Keller to answer this as practically as I know how. He gives us this tool to use. It's a three-circle Venn diagram, and you'll find your custom yoke at the space in the center of these three circles. Let me talk about each of these.

The three circles are *desire*, *design*, and *door*. In this first circle of *desire*, this is the work you desire. This is the stuff you like to do. This is the work you're passionate about. Even when it's difficult, you kind of like doing it. All that stuff goes in this first circle.

The second circle is *design*. This is the work God designed you uniquely for. This is the stuff you're naturally good at. How do you know what goes in here? Where do people acknowledge your competence? It has to be people with no reason to flatter you. It can't be your mom. It has to be someone with no reason to flatter you. If they acknowledge your competence in an area, this stuff goes in the second circle of design.

The third circle is *door*. Is there a job opportunity? Is the door open? Is there a demand in the marketplace? Has God opened up a door for you to actually do it? You'll discover your custom yoke at the space at the center of these three circles where they overlap the most.

It's a helpful tool, a helpful framework, but we need to talk about one more thing so we don't abuse this framework: the weight of responsibility. Your yoke isn't just about fit; it's about the load. It's a tool, not a toy. You don't put a yoke on an ox so it can express its inner self. How ridiculous. You put it on so it can pull some weight.

So, let's say you enjoy singing 80s music. You have desire to do that. And you sound like Freddie Mercury. You have design. You're pretty good at it. And local restaurants love having you come out as much as you want. They'll pay you a little bit, and you come out and do that.

Does that mean…desire, design, door…this is your custom yoke? Well, not if you have a wife and a few kids at home and you're being well compensated for your desk job that you're less passionate about, because the massive pay cut to gig around at local restaurants during your kids' bedtime is not going to pull the weight of responsibility God has already placed on you.

The three circles tell you what you *could* do, but your responsibility tells you what you *must* do. This is hard to figure out in real life. A lot of conversation with trusted friends or your spouse, or whatever else, helps tease this out a little bit. Here's the principle: it's more meaningful to pull the weight than it is to have fun while you pull. Your responsibility is not the enemy of your custom yoke; it's the reason you put the yoke on in the first place.

What we're really talking about here is stewardship…stewardship of your unique giftedness, personality, opportunities, and everything God has put in front of you. If we could be honest, we probably all have an opportunity to be better stewards than we currently are.

Why aren't people better stewards? There are probably a few reasons. One reason is laziness. I think some people are just lazy. Some people just don't want to work very hard. Now, I would actually argue that even lazy people end up working pretty hard, just on things that don't matter. They find an activity to invest in that doesn't have any real-world stakes.

For example, what even are video games? Video games are basically fake work. Video games are hard work with no stakes. This is why you can't interrupt your son playing his video game. "Hey, it's time for dinner." "Mom, get out of my room. I'm working hard in here." He *is* working hard. Just no stakes.

That leads me to the second reason I think people are bad stewards: fear. People are afraid of stakes in the real world. People are afraid of failing, getting found out, getting embarrassed. People are afraid to take on the real-world stakes, the real-world risk that good stewardship requires.

For some of you guys, men in particular, you have an opportunity to be a better steward. It applies to the women, too, but I can say it a little more bluntly if I just single out the guys, so let's just say I'm talking to the guys right now. Women, you can listen in.

Young men, some of you guys need to take a risk that good stewardship would require. You just need to go ahead and ask her out. You didn't think that's where I was going with this, did you? I'm being dead serious. Watch this. So much of the future yoke God has prepared for you, young men, centers around your future family, and step one is pursuing a godly woman. She might say no, but she might not. Don't say no for her because you're scared. Don't bury your future underneath your fear.

Some of you guys have done this, but you have to take the next step. It's time to go buy a ring. She's awesome, dude. Don't hear me incorrectly. There are reasons and seasons to not get married. Okay? But if all you can come up with is "I'm scared," that ain't it. Don't bury your future underneath your fear.

Some of you men need to start the process of thinking about what it looks like to change your career. You're in a job you hate, but you're good enough at it. You just keep coasting through it year after year, but you're actually really gifted, and there's an opportunity right in front of you, and you're just scared. It might be time to put on a different yoke and start pulling some more weight. Don't bury your future underneath your fear.

Some of you guys have done a really good job in one category but maybe not so good a job of being a good steward in another. Like, maybe you've been a leader in the workplace. You're maximizing everything there as best you can, but then at church, you

hear about how we need some more leaders for Community Groups for all of these new people we have coming around, and you're like, "Ah, I don't know if I'm a leader like that."

Really? You've been following the Lord for a decade. You actually just wrote about how good of a leader you are on your self-evaluation for your annual review. I think you might be a leader like that, actually. Some of you guys are going to need, in this next season as a church, to think about the risk that good stewardship would require of you when we start sending out campuses, church plants, and missionaries.

This is kind of an inflection point for our church, actually. If we are the sending church we say we want to be, it depends on *this*: you considering the risk that good stewardship requires of you and whether or not you should go. Here's what I mean. If everybody says, "No, I'm not going," we're not a sending church. That's all that means.

What is it for you? Where is fear preventing you from finding your fit? Go to the Lord about it. "God, if I do this, will you help me do this?" He'll help you do it. Ask some people you trust about it. Run through the three circles. Then, if you get through all that, just do it. I think you'll love it, actually. I think you'll find it's light work.

When you discover your design and then start walking through open doors, the work becomes light. It becomes exhilarating. There's the fourth key to unlocking light work: finding your fit. Guys, I truly believe this gospel lens we talked about today can transform the joy with which you go about your work. I mean, this gospel we believe has so many benefits, so many implications for real life. We talked about some of them today.

God has custom work for you that he has designed you perfectly for, and he'll get in alongside you and do it right next to you, help you do it. What a benefit. Your soul can rest while you do this. So many gospel benefits. There's more than this, obviously. For example, you'll live forever with God. *That's* a gospel benefit. You have a family forever in the church. You're loved forever in spite of your performance. So many gospel benefits for the Christian.

I want us to notice one thing here as we close. The converse is also true. If you haven't taken that first step of making Jesus Christ Lord, he's not going to walk with you into the big meeting. You're on your own. Your soul won't be at rest in your work. You'll never get there. You'll just keep following these voices that lie, and you'll be restless always. You don't have a home forever with God. I mean, just go down the list. All of the gospel benefits wait for you on the other side of taking the first step of trusting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

I spent all day talking about your work, but that first step has nothing to do with your work and everything to do with somebody else's work: Jesus Christ. I spent all day talking about your custom yoke, but God made a custom yoke for Jesus to shoulder as well, and that job was hard, the hardest job possible. Here it is: "Remove the sin from humanity. Take mortal, sinful people and transform them into immortal children of God." Well, this sounds like a hard job. My goodness.

What are the requirements of this job? Well, among other things, "Live a perfect, sinless life that God would accept and be proud of. Die a substitutionary, sacrificial death in the place of sinners for their sin. Rise up resurrected as proof you actually did it, that you actually moved the weight." Well, *that's* a hard job. My goodness. A double yoke at least? Nah, a single yoke. He suffered and died alone. His friends left him. Single yoke. But Jesus did it, and it's done.

The greatest work, friends, that you need done is work you can't do. The removal of your sin from your soul is a job you can't handle. For that job, Jesus said, "I'll do it," and he did, and it's done. If you would like to take that first step, which is not by your work but only by faith in the completed work of Christ, and unlock for yourself all of the gospel benefits we've been talking about today (and there are so many more), I want to give you an opportunity at all of our campuses to do this right now.

Would you guys go ahead and bow your heads and close your eyes with me? Some of y'all are so weary and so heavy laden. You've followed voices that lied to you for such a long time. If you're ready to follow the voice of Christ… Don't do this if you're not ready, but if you are, you can just pray in your heart something like this right after me.

"Lord Jesus, you say, 'Come to me if you're weary.' Well, I'm weary. My sin haunts me. I'm striving alone, no partner, following voices that lie to me. It's so exhausting. So I'm coming to you. I believe you. I believe you've done everything necessary to save me, so would you save me? Be my Savior, and be my Lord. I'm tired of following these voices that lie to me. I'm ready to follow yours. Be my Lord. Wherever you ask me to go, whatever you want me to do, just be my Lord. As long as it's you, I'll do it."

If you just prayed that prayer and meant it, all of the gospel benefits and so many more… It'll take you a lifetime to figure out what all it means, such a wonderful lifetime of figuring it out. They're all yours based on the completed work of Christ and your faith in it.

We're going to have a time of response here where you can come down. I'd encourage you to do that. Come tell somebody. We're going to have baptisms at all of our services. I would encourage you to come tell somebody and get baptized after the 5:00 service

tonight if you prayed that prayer. You can come down. The altar is open for you to continue a conversation with the Lord about any number of the things we talked about today.

Some of you guys need to come down here and lay a career decision before the Lord. You need to grab your wife's hand or grab your husband's hand and walk down here and lay a career decision before the Lord. Some of y'all are so weary in your parenting, and you just need to come down here and ask Jesus, a more powerful partner than you, to help. Just lay it before the Lord. The altar is open for you.

Some of you guys feel completely stuck in a job you hate. You've actually been, maybe for the last 10 or 15 minutes, a little low-grade upset with me as I was challenging you to take risks, because you're like, "Dude, I took some risks. I asked her out and she said no. Okay? I was saving for the ring, then she left me. I applied for the job; I didn't get it. I got the job; I hate it. God doesn't have it for me. Okay? So lay off." You need to come down here and wrestle with the Lord about that too.

As you're doing that, the rest of us at all of our campuses are going to sing over you of the good plans God has for you. Just because you don't see them doesn't mean he doesn't have them. That's not good logic. He has them. You need to come down and talk to the Lord about it, and we're going to prophesy over you of the good plans he has for you at all of our campuses. Let me pray for us, and we'll do all this together, this time of response.

Lord Jesus Christ, the Christian confession to follow you does not require you to tell us exactly what every step is. As long as you're with us, we'll keep walking, God. For those in here who don't understand what their next step is and who are very frustrated by it, God, I ask that in these next few moments you would give them so much peace and comfort that surpasses understanding because they know the God who made them and loves them has a plan and is with them. Please do all this right now. Thank you for your love for us. Thank you that you loved us first. In Jesus' name, amen.