

Sunday, July 2, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
“Taking the Yoke”
Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 and Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants answer, “What images come to your mind when you hear ‘yoke’ or ‘taking the yoke’?”

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67. Context. Following the account of God’s testing of Abraham at Mt. Moriah, the story of Genesis tells of the death of Sarah and her burial at Hebron where Abraham had purchased a bit of land for that purpose (this site remains sacred to this today). Then Abraham seeks a wife for his son, Isaac, sending his most senior servant to travel back to the land where the rest of his family still lived, taking camels and other gifts and seeking the Lord’s guidance in finding a likely wife for Isaac. The servant travelled to the city of Nahor, where Abraham’s brother lived, and there encountered Rebekah at the well. When he was satisfied that she was the one he was to find, he gave her gifts. This week’s reading picks up the story as Abraham’s servant meets the rest of the family, explaining his mission.

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30. Context. This week’s reading comes on the heels of Matthew’s account of John the Baptist’s wavering faith in Jesus and the questions many people had about John. It begins with Jesus commenting on the rejection of both John and Jesus by the crowds: John, because he was too severe, Jesus, because he seemed too lax. As he prays, he notes that it is only the innocents and the unsophisticated who possess the divine Wisdom (= the Son) to truly understand God. For the “learned,” their learning can be an impediment to knowing God. Jesus ends with an invitation to true discipleship, unburdened by the artificialities of life and the barriers to God that we erect ourselves.

Read Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 and Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

Read Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 and Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Abraham trusted God’s provision and gave the task to his servant to find a wife for Isaac. His servant prayed for God’s guidance to find her. Rebekah said “yes” to leaving her homeland to marry Isaac. How do you understand the concept of “faith”? How is faith demonstrated in these stories?

- “There might be many approaches we could take to twining these stories (Gen 24 & Matthew 11), but one direction might be for us to acknowledge that despite our cultural proclivity to turn everything into an individual enterprise, **the life of faith and/or being a disciple by design involves other people**. And these other people are not just objects to act upon, but subjects with whom we are to develop relationships. **Making disciples is about being in relationship**. We may want it to be about leaving tracts or making good arguments or convincing folks and then leaving them to find their way on their own. But that’s not how it works. It is about commitment and relationship and partnership.”
- What might it look like to be in relationship to make disciples? What area of your life do you need to work on being in relationship? (i.e. church, work, home, community, leisure, etc.)
- What might it mean to come to Jesus and find rest? (Matthew 11:28-30) What kind of rest is Jesus offering? How is this like and not like a day at the spa? Or a nap? Jesus offers a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light. How might this contrast with the burdens we often carry in life?
- How might we apply Jesus’ invitation to rest in our daily lives? What does it mean to surrender our burdens to Jesus? How might we find true rest in him? How might you develop a personal relationship with Jesus? Which of the following would you like to work on this week?
 - Spend time in prayer, pouring out your heart, concerns, and burdens to Jesus.
 - Meditate on God's words from the Bible, seeking God’s wisdom, guidance, and promises. ([You can find the daily Upper Room Devotion here.](#))
 - Seek the Holy Spirit through worship, praise, and quiet reflection.
 - Find a supportive Christian community that encourages and supports you.
 - Prioritize time for self-care, physical rest, and nurturing your spiritual well-being.
 - Something else?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Gracious and Loving God, as we learn the path of discipleship, we humbly take upon ourselves Your yoke. Teach us, guide us, and help us grow in faith and obedience. May our lives reflect Your love and bring glory to Your name. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.