Dear Open Door Family,

I am a very visual person and so symbols mean a lot to me. My wedding ring is a precious symbol that I belong to Carol and nobody else. And there are many other visible symbols that have special meaning to me. My office is full of those kinds of visual reminders. A chamber pot which reminds me that the Lord is the one who shapes me and molds me into whatever form He has chosen and that my job is to be clean and fit for His service. This year for Christmas some friends at church gave me a real wooden yoke. One that had actually been used to harness two oxen together to pull a load at some time in the past. It is now on my wall where every time I look up from my desk I see it. Why would I want a yoke? Because for me it is a symbol of submission and discipleship. Let's look at these verses together.

Matthew 11:28-30 *(NLT) Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*

Jesus invites us *"take my yoke upon you."* A yoke is a wooden frame which joined two animals together so that they could pull heavy loads. It was also used as a word picture of one person's subjection to another like the yoke of slavery. (ESV Study Bible) It is interesting that Jesus does not call us to lives of luxury and ease. The symbol of the yoke implies work - it implies submission - it implies a unified direction. Jesus calls us to join Him in the yoke. That means we are to submit to Him (Rom. 12:1) and we join Him in pulling the load. He has promised that our load will never be heavier than we can bear and that in fact it is *"easy to bear."* WHY? Because we are NEVER by ourselves in the yoke. We are with Him. All we need to do is join Him, submit to Him, and pull in the direction that He is going. So the yoke of discipleship is the yoke of submission, the yoke of pulling along with the Lord (following His lead), the yoke of resting in His strength and power. We must never forget that the "yoke is still an oxen's tool for working hard. But it's a shared yoke, with weight falling on much bigger shoulders than ours." (Life Application Bible) So, no matter what we are facing - no matter how weary we may feel of life, the true rest of Discipleship and walking with Jesus is done while we are in the Yoke with Him. This is a call to join Jesus everyday in the yoke of discipleship.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank You for inviting me to JOIN YOU in the Yoke. Lord, I confess that I have tried to carry the load alone at times. Please, Lord Jesus, help me to willingly, joyfully submit every single day to being with YOU in the yoke of discipleship. Lord, help me; I feel weary and burdened at times and I long for Your rest.

Pastor Mark Kieft

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