

Women's Bible Study:	Discipleship Ministries Folder 2021 #1
Subject:	Holiness and a Life that Pleases God: Courage
Scripture References:	2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Leviticus 26:13, Isaiah 10:27, Matthew 11:28-30
Theme:	Yokes?
Objective:	That the sisters in Christ will decide to embrace the life that the Spirit gives them, that they will choose to yoke themselves with Christ as their companion and reject all others.

Introduction: A yoke is an instrument used to connect two oxen or donkeys together, by the head or neck, so they work together to till the land. It is a bar that connects the two together so they can function as one. One time, in the Middle East, a farmer was plowing a field with a camel and a donkey yoked together. The camel was three times taller than the donkey and its legs were three times longer than the donkey's. The march was slow for the camel, but the donkey was at full speed and could not keep up with the camel. The owner whipped the donkey to make him catch up. Such tremendous cruelty! Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation, a situation where things don't go right, and you feel like you can't take it anymore? Let's see what the Bible tells us.

First, let's see what the Bible says about a yoke? The Bible states that it is cruel to join two things together that are of dissimilar or incompatible natures. A yoke could be a marriage, a relationship, a job. The reality is that not all associations are yokes. Yokes have two relevant characteristics: The first is that they aren't easy to break; a yoke is a permanent relationship, that when chosen, you cannot get out of even if it's uncomfortable; the yoke remains. The second characteristic is that a yoke restricts those in it; the yoke doesn't allow independent action, the yoke forces them to work together, whether they like it or not. Let me tell you dear sister, that we are all subject to yokes in this life.

Proposition: Only the yoke of the Spirit can set you free

Let's look at three aspects of the yoke of the Spirit that will set us free:

I. DISCERNMENT: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Although the word "discernment" isn't used, that's what this passage is about.

- Paul tells the Corinthian church to be discerning. What is discernment? It's knowing how to distinguish the real from the counterfeit, the truth from the lie. Discernment is a gift given by the Spirit of God, but common-sense discernment is something that every Christian should have. The problem is that common sense is sometimes not so common, but through the practice of prayer, having knowledge of the Bible, and with the presence of the Lord, we all can acquire the understanding of people and the sensitivity to have discernment. However, dear sisters, it's not the same to trust your intuition as it is to have the discernment that the Spirit of God gives you. There are several types of discernment that we need, but the most important is that we know how to distinguish what's false from what's true, what's from God and what isn't from God, and what's essential from what's not essential. Failure to discern can cause fighting and division between God's people and in any relationships you have.
- The apostle Paul speaks to the Corinthians in this second epistle as a father speaks to his children. He offers them the best advice a father or minister can give to his people. *"Do not be unequally yoked together..."* (NKJV)
- The Church is different from the world, and God doesn't accept any unequal yoking between his people and the world. The apostle John said it like this in 1 John 2:15-17, *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."*

- All people submit to some kind of a yoke. Women are especially vulnerable. This Bible passage doesn't refer to association with non-believers. Christians can associate in many ways with non-believers; Jesus did it all the time. We must be with unbelievers in order to minister to them! Rather, this passage refers to the fact that you must discern who or what influences you. You cannot be influenced by what is going on around you without being discerning. God is different from the world in quality and purpose. Think of it like this; you're like a boat that's in the water, but the water can't get into the boat.
- Many people think that they can be around worldly things as much as they want to and they'll be strong enough not to be contaminated, not to be influenced by the world. God's Word warns us to be careful with the salvation that God has given us. 1 Cor. 15:33, *"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"* It also says in Philippians 2:12, *"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ..."*
- This is a call to action ... a call to withdraw from people and situations that may influence you negatively or that are contradictory to God's Word. The blessing is that God will take action as he has promised. God dwells in the midst of our lives and wants to manifest himself as our God, as our Father.

APPLICATION

- The woman connected to God examines EVERYTHING.
- She protects her relationship with the Spirit of God. She who doesn't know what she has doesn't protect it, doesn't take care of it with zeal. You know the blessing you've received. Can you share it today?
- The basis of discernment is LOVE. I protect my relationship with God because I love him.
- You must reject everything that influences your life negatively or that goes against God's will. That may mean rejecting relationships, opportunities, jobs, hobbies, games, attitudes, preferences, etc.
- Embrace the holiness that has been given to you.
- The goal isn't to just stop doing things that go against God's will, but to embrace and flourish in the holiness of God and grow in His holiness *"...so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ..."* (Philippians 1:10)

II. ANOINTING: Isaiah 10:27

- The people of Israel had to wear the yokes of slavery and servitude.
 - Under those yokes, there was neither mercy nor hope.
 - Some of those yokes were the Lord's judgment on them.
- God created them to live in his holiness.
 - God intervened and broke Israel's yoke of slavery in Egypt.
 - God intervened and broke/destroyed the yoke of Assyria over Israel, with his anointing.

APPLICATION

- The psalmist says: *"You anoint my head with oil; ..."*
- Whether you got to where you are now from making bad decisions, or because of difficult situations, God doesn't want you to bear the yoke of slavery to ANYTHING or ANYONE.
- The Lord has already poured out his oil (Holy Spirit) on the Church to liberate, to bless, to cleanse and to give spiritual health.
- The one who puts a yoke on you wants you to work his land and sow whatever seed he sees fit.
- The master of the yoke is the one who tells you what you are going to do; that's why the master of the yoke of your life has to be Christ.

III. REST: Matthew 11:28-30

- Jesus talks to people who are tired and overwhelmed.
- The common people had, on one hand, the yoke of Rome and, on the other hand, the yoke of religious legalism.
- They didn't find peace in their beliefs; religion was a gigantic yoke which caused pain and anguish. The people wore a heavy yoke.
- What is the animal's job: to carry the yoke or to plow the ground? The job of the animal isn't to carry the yoke, but to plow the ground.
- The yoke of religion is a burden that bears no fruit.
- That yoke is an appearance of worship – an appearance of piety – dutifully fulfilling religious obligations.

APPLICATION

- Jesus wants us to wear his yoke; it seems complicated, but it's very easy.
- Jesus recognizes how tired we are.
- The woman who doesn't connect with God is exhausted. The yokes of the world are exhausting, abusive, take away sanctity, take away health, and take away well-being.
- Jesus offers you the yoke of the Spirit; his yoke adds everything our life needs. He offers us a yoke of discipleship, a yoke of walking with the Lord.
- His yoke is not an unequal yoke, it's the perfect yoke for you; it's a yoke of grace, love and abundant life. What other attributes does Christ's yoke offer you?

CONCLUSION:

- God has called you to be free
- Make a decision to accept Christ's offer and love what he gives you, choose wisely how and with whom you will share your yoke.
 - We pray that the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life will break every yoke that tries to bring inappropriate submission into your life.
 - Accept the invitation of Jesus, wear his yoke of love, learn from him.

- Today the Spirit can be poured out in a powerful way in your life.
- Today you can accept the Lord's invitation to walk with him, for the first time, or seek a closer walk with him.

REFLECTION:

Can you share some things that you think are yokes in your life? Why are they yokes? If you describe some yokes in your life, can you share how they bring or take away blessing from your life?

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