

Resting In God

By Randy Kilgore

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light". Matthew 11:28-30

Ann and Jason are young professionals with satisfying jobs, loving families, healthy bank accounts and a history of faith from their youngest days. Yet both are sitting across a table from me during a break at a conference discussing their disappointments and difficulties. "Life", Ann remarks, "seems like it should be easier by now".

They're not alone. Christians in every culture and every economic level find themselves struggling with emptiness and/or difficulties that seem intractable. On the other side of life's spectrum are Tim and Melissa, two people whose stories spilled out during a chance encounter when they learned I was a chaplain. Nothing seems to be working out for them. Tim's been out of work for three years and Melissa can't find work in her field, so she's underemployed and underpaid. The money troubles have put a strain on their marriage and the stresses accompanying all of this have put a strain on their faith. "Life", Tim remarks, "seems like it should be easier by now".

We each have a variation on the 'life is hard' theme. In fact, life can frequently feel overwhelming. It's not just the sin side of life that's disappointing or hard, either. Many Christians believe their best efforts to please God are producing no visible results, and some believe they are seeing negative results. The problem for all of us is our tendency to try harder; to attempt things in our own strength which can only be accomplished by God. The problem is also our perspective: We're looking at life and dealing with it through the prism of our humanity touched up by our faith, rather than looking at it through the eyes of Jesus.

So here's the 'secret' recipe to a happy and productive Christian life: Know Jesus intimately by reading His word faithfully.

As you load in Scripture by reading it regularly, you provide the Holy Spirit with resources within you to be 'Googled out' as you need them. Want to evangelize? Delay studying techniques and strategies and **study Jesus first**, who is the Living Word revealed in the Bible. Then, when a chance to talk about Jesus presents itself, the Holy Spirit draws on the words you need and wisdom to apply them because you've front-loaded them. The Holy Spirit will not pre-load, nor will the Holy Spirit 'Google' truth you haven't encountered. Knowing Jesus is a slow, steady intake of the Bible's truths.

Want to stop hurting people unintentionally? Read the Word, and you will suddenly begin seeing everyone who crosses your path with the eyes of Christ.

Want to beat that besetting sin? Trying harder rarely works; in fact, trying harder is often why we're trapped, because anything that takes our eyes off of Jesus forces us to tackle life in our own strength and in our own diminished wisdom. Spend your energy and effort knowing Christ---by reading His Word---and the Holy Spirit will add power and strength to your efforts to conquer whatever entangles you. Before we begin to work on any change we need to make, from loving the unlovable to resisting the irresistible, we must first know Jesus. Every other path, every other remedy, every other action will leave us feeling overwhelmed and stressed. **"Come to Me", Jesus says, "and I will give you rest"**.