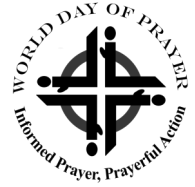


World Day of Prayer

Prepared by the WDP Committee of
Nigeria



March 6th, 2026

“I Will Give You Rest: Come”

Matthew 11 : 28



Bible Study

World Day of Prayer (Scottish Committee)

Charity Number SC020446

Website <http://www.wdpScotland.org.uk>

INTENTION

This programme calls us all to come closer to God and find rest in God. When we totally trust and have faith in God, our burdens become light, and we find rest. The programme was written by a group of ecumenical Christian Nigerian women in response to the theme, *"I Will Give You Rest: Come"* (Matthew 11:28-30). They say 'we reflected collectively on this theme from the context of our experiences as Nigerian Christian women. We hope to inspire other women in the world to unite and pray as one people. As we trust God, our Burden Bearer, we become one body in Christ, receiving and bringing rest to the world'.

INTRODUCTION

"Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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)

These words of Jesus come after a series of teachings and miracles in Galilee. Despite facing questions and doubts from various groups, Jesus continues to invite people to understand God's kingdom in a new way. His call to "come and find rest" is not just a momentary relief but an invitation to a new way of living in relationship with God.

The concept of a 'yoke' might seem strange to us today, but it was a common image in Jewish teachings. Often, it symbolised the law or religious obligations. However, Jesus offers a different kind of yoke - one that brings rest rather than burden.

As we delve deeper into this study, let's open our hearts to hear Jesus' invitation anew, exploring what it means to bring our burdens to Him and find true rest for our souls.

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, as we begin this study, open our hearts and minds to your Word. Help us to hear your invitation to rest anew. Guide our understanding and discussions, that we might draw closer to you and find the rest our souls need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Discussion Question:

What does the idea of "rest" mean to you in your current life situation?

MATTHEW 11:28-30 IN CONTEXT

To better understand Jesus' invitation to rest, this section will explore scripture passages that illuminate different aspects of rest. Let's look at how rest is woven into creation itself and God's commands for human flourishing.

I: Rest in God's Design

"On the sixth day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation." (Genesis 2:2-3)

"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." (Exodus 20:8-10)

These scriptures illuminate Matthew 11:28-30 by showing that rest is woven into the very fabric of creation, beginning with God's own example. The commandment to keep the Sabbath reveals that rest is not just a suggestion but a divine mandate, essential for our well-being and relationship with God. *Jesus says 'Take my yoke upon you and I will give you rest'.* Jesus offers us a different kind of yoke – one which is easy to carry.

We will now either read or sing Psalm 23:

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
In the presence of my enemies
You anoint my head with oil
My cup overflows
Surely goodness and mercy shall
Follow me
All the days of my life
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
My whole life long*

The shepherd imagery in Psalm 23 shows that true rest comes when we allow ourselves to be led by God, trusting in divine guidance and care, just as Jesus invites us to learn from his gentle and humble heart.

Discussion Question:

How might these three different images of rest - God resting after creation, the commandment to keep the Sabbath, and being led to rest by a shepherd - help us better understand Jesus' invitation: "*Come to me... and I will give you rest*"?

REST FOR EVERY BURDEN

In every age, people have carried different kinds of burdens, each one weighing heavily on body, mind, and spirit. Through exploring four specific burdens - shame, systemic oppression, religious persecution, and poverty and despair - we discover how God's promise of rest speaks to the deepest struggles of our time. These burdens, illuminated through the stories of our Nigerian sisters in the worship service, help us understand both the weight of human suffering and the profound rest that God offers

The Burden of Shame or Low Self-Esteem

So many of us carry the heavy burden of shame. Our societies often judge us harshly, telling us we are not good enough - as students, parents, children or believers. This shame weighs us down, making it hard to find the rest our souls long for. In addition we often judge ourselves harshly and think we are not good enough.

The Bible reminds us that in the beginning, God looked at all of creation, including humanity, and called it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Our worth does not come from what others think, but from the love of our Creator. When we come to Jesus and take up his easy yoke, we can shed the shame that has haunted us. Our faith frees us to embrace our identity as the beloved children of God.

Discussion Question:

How can remembering our identity as God's "very good" creation heal the burden of shame or low self-esteem that affects us and so many people across cultures and contexts?

The Burden of Systemic Oppression

Many in our world today face the crushing weight of systemic oppression - unjust social, economic, and political structures that relentlessly marginalise certain groups. This burden robs people of their dignity, agency, and opportunity to flourish. Whether it is the legacy of colonialism, the exploitation of the poor, or the oppression of religious and ethnic minorities, these dehumanising systems can make it seem impossible to find true rest and liberation.

The wisdom tradition in the Bible, particularly books like Proverbs, directly addresses the burden of systemic oppression. These ancient teachings emphasise the importance of treating everyone fairly, caring for the vulnerable, and advocating for justice on behalf of the oppressed. Through exhortations against exploiting the poor, showing kindness to widows, and upholding ethi-

cal conduct in all social interactions, the wisdom literature promotes a vision of a righteous and just society. When we embrace this wisdom, we uncover the spiritual resources and moral clarity needed to confront and dismantle the unjust systems that oppress our communities. By heeding God's invitation to "come" and find rest, we join the collective work of building a more equitable world where everyone can truly rest.

Discussion Question:

In what way do the teachings of Jesus challenge and transform the systemic oppressions that continue to weigh so heavily on our world today?

The Burden of Religious Persecution

The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:44 - "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" - speak to the heavy burden carried by all who face persecution, whether for their faith, ethnicity, or any other aspect of their identity. In a world that often marginalises and oppresses those deemed "different," these teachings offer a radical call to respond with compassion rather than retaliation.

The path of love that Jesus models provides spiritual strength to those facing hostility and rejection. In the face of persecution, we can find rest in God - not by harbouring hatred or intolerance, but by letting Christ's love flow through us. In making this choice, we find that our burdens truly do become light, and in God, we find our rest.

Discussion Question:

How can Jesus' message to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" inspire and empower those facing persecution?

The Burdens of Poverty and Despair

The biblical accounts of God's provision and concern for the poor and marginalised offer a powerful counterpoint to the crushing weight of poverty and despair. The image in Psalm 23 of being led to "green pastures" and "still waters" suggests a God who desires abundant life for all, not just the wealthy and privileged. This vision speaks directly to the realities faced by so many in our communities who struggle to make ends meet and find themselves overwhelmed by hopelessness.

Yet even in the face of daunting economic hardship, the Scriptures urge us to hold fast to the promise that "those who are cast down will be lifted up." Rather than simply coping, we are invited to live by faith, keeping our eyes fixed on the truth that God will open new doors and make a way where there seems to be no way. Though the path may not be easy, our steadfast trust in God can give us spiritual strength, community support, and vision to keep us dreaming and working towards a brighter future. In our struggles, we may be burdened, but we need not be broken - for we serve a God who desires to fill our lives with abundance.

Discussion Question:

How can the biblical vision of God's care for the poor, along with the Scriptures' call to persevere in faith, even in the face of economic hardship, inspire and empower us to address the root causes of poverty and despair within our communities?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, our Burden Bearer, we come before your throne of grace, hearts full of thanksgiving even in our weariness.

You see your children carrying heavy loads:
the burden of shame that makes us forget your proclamation of goodness,
the oppression that crushes our families and communities,
the persecution that tests our faith daily,
and the poverty that leads so many to despair.

Mighty God, you who created rest as a gift for all people, we praise you for your wisdom that leads us to peaceful paths. We rejoice that Jesus shows us true rest, not in heavy rules, but in justice, mercy and kindness.

Loving Father, give us the boldness to bring our burdens to you, the humility to learn from Jesus, our gentle teacher, and the strength to help others find rest. Make us vessels of your peace.

We trust you, for you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Lead us beside quiet waters, O Shepherd of our souls. Restore our hope and guide us in right paths, that we might find rest for our journey.

In the mighty name of Jesus, who calls us to come and find rest, Amen.

Additional material for the Bible Study can be found on our website www.wdpScotland.org.uk

Matthew 11:28



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World Day of Prayer Movement

In 1910 more than 400 women met for the World Mission Conference (Edinburgh) bringing their experience and wisdom developed through years of ecumenical partnership in many countries. WDP was born. Today World Day of Prayer is an ecumenical prayer movement bringing together millions every year from over 100 countries to pray, worship and learn.

Through World Day of Prayer, people are encouraged:

to become aware of the whole world and no longer live in isolation
to be enriched by the faith experience of Christians of other countries
and cultures
to take up the burdens of other people and pray with and for them
to become aware of their talents and use them in the service of society
to affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and both have immeasurable influence in the world

Scottish Committee Mission Statement

As representatives of the churches in Scotland, and members of a world-wide movement of Christian women, we work to promote prayerful living and worship for men, women and children, and to raise awareness of the lives and concerns of others throughout the world, especially those who write the service.

We encourage ecumenical planning for World Day of Prayer services, facilitating them by preparing material supportive of the annual international theme and country. We generate resources in support of Christian literature distribution and projects giving practical help to people in the writing country.

More information can be found on our website www.wdpScotland.org.uk and on our facebook page 'World Day of Prayer Scotland'.

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Friday 5th March 2027

Service written by WDP International Committee

"United in Prayer for Justice and Peace!"



World Day of Prayer (Scottish Committee)

Charity Number SC020446

Website <http://www.wdpScotland.org.uk>