

THE YOKE AND THE PLOW

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Exhaustion seems to be the undercurrent of our culture right now. COVID just reared up and blasted us over the last 2 years, and while there has certainly been a spectrum of loss, even on the best side of the swing there has been a cumulative ask that has diminished our energy reserves. It makes it tough to get excited about the work we're going to do next. As we gaze into this new year many of us are asking: *"What am I supposed to do next? How am I going to do that? What should I hope in?"* Whatever we hope in, we trust... it's what we're yoked to. Maybe a yoke seems harsh... but what if we were yoked to a source of strength that far surpassed our own? Well... then it's kind.

In the blocks

Ever been to a track and field meet? During a short distance race you'll see the runners doing high-knees and shaking out their muscles, stretching their arms and filling their lungs — until the gunman says those greatly anticipated words: "Runners, take your mark!" And they all move forward and step into the blocks. They're preparing all of their strength to pour out on that lane as soon as the gun goes off. But at the end of the race those runners look a lot different. Their hands are up over their heads in an effort to breathe deeply - they're gasping and walking and some are even throwing up on the side-lines. They've given all that they had and are ready for recovery.

Right now, some of you feel like you just got to the end of the race, turned around, and were asked to get back into the blocks.

Some of you are gearing up and ready to blast off — we need you. DO IT. Beautifully. Run your race well. I believe in a God who **prepares and positions**, so if you have reserves... use them courageously.

Either way, **none of us were asked to operate out of a deficit**. None of us are asked to bear up under the burden of our next assignments under our own strength. If you are exhausted, *take heart* — the strength you are equipped with to proceed is not your own. The hardest job you might have this year is saying: *"God, I am coming up under your yoke, help me plow the way you want this to go."* That kind of surrender might just be the hinge that the quality of your year rests upon.

"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.

Plowing differently

When we come up under His yoke, we plow differently. When we plow out from under His yoke, we encounter weariness and wounds in ways we were never meant to endure. The throne of God is still stable — regardless of the conditions of our culture.

And if that's true, we can engage our assignments with renewed strength. We can shake off anxiety. When we say, "I trust you," we are not ruled by circumstances and we will not drown in an undercurrent of demands. We will have everything we need to do what we've been asked to do. I cannot believe that we are given access to a God who is so gentle, so generous, and so good. If you want to taste more of this truth in ways that will probably change your life -- check out [Gentle and Lowly](#), by Dane Ortland.

Maybe is the year that you will sense His strength. Maybe this is the year that you will watch him equip you to do things you never imagined was possible. His power is limitless, let's come up under His yoke.