

Extravagant Love and a Dog Named Benji

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)*

I have been listening to a podcast (www.bemadiscipleship.com) by Marty Solomon that looks at the Bible through the eyes of Eastern cultures. In one episode, Marty talked about "yokes."

At the time of Jesus, there were two primary rabbinical lines of thought (yokes). When there was a conflict between two Torah laws, the rabbis had to determine which laws were more important than others. Everyone agreed that the first law is "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul."

Rabbi Shammai taught that "obedience" was the second in importance. Rabbi Hillel taught that "relationship" was the second. Jesus agreed with Rabbi Hillel,

*"and a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
On these two commandments depend all the Laws and the Prophets."
Matt. 22:39-40 (ESV)*

Today is Labor Day, a government decreed day of rest for laborers; just one day a year. Our God, though, understands us and has a better plan. He knows that we burn the candle at both ends and sometimes also in the middle. From creation, He set aside one day a week to rest and called it Sabbath.

Do you think of keeping the Sabbath in terms of obedience or relationship?

Tom and I have learned to appreciate the sabbath though we are flexible on which day. A day to turn off the electronic devices and sit on the porch at our land to relax; watching the grass grow, the chickens in the yard and enjoy a day of rest and the blessings that the Lord gives us.

I have been learning a lot about my relationship with the Lord through observing and thinking about our dog, Benji. Benji is a Hillel-yoke dog; obedience is always second to his relationship with us. He loves to cuddle, to ride in cars, and to run. Boy, does he love to run!



He wakes me up at 5 am with his cold nose in my face to tell me it is time to get up and spend time with him. He doesn't want to eat, drink or play. He just wants us to be with him, to love him and spend time with him (of course, he wouldn't mind at all if it included a ride in the car or a run at the land). He longs to be with us. He reminds me of extravagant love!

Isn't that a beautiful picture of how I need to be with Jesus? Longing to just be with him, as much as He longs to be my Joy and to be with me. Isn't a yoke of Love much easier to carry than a yoke of Obedience? Our ministry is based on love; the big extravagant love of the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit for us! It fills us with Joy and the Desire to run full tilt, loving everyone around us!

May you be yoked to Jesus' extravagant love and find rest,

Nancy and Tom Rach

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"For the Equipping of the Saints and the Strengthening of the Body of Christ" Eph 4:12