



THE OX & THE YOKE

In 1st century Rome, they had a coin with the image of an Ox on both sides. One side showed the Ox ploughing, and the other showed the Ox on an altar, ready to be sacrificed. The inscription on both sides of the coin read: “Ready for both”.

This intriguing imagery invites us to understand what it means to live as a living sacrifice and embrace servanthood in worship.

Remember the scene from Revelation 4 depicting four creatures leading worship? The ox in this account symbolises servanthood, modelling worship both through its labour and its sacrifice. In this session, we will be looking at the significance of the ox and how it unlocks the essence of true worship for us.

The ox demonstrates the power of serving by embodying a noble sacrifice: actively worshipping the King.

Romans 12:1-2 calls us to a profound form of worship: presenting ourselves as living sacrifices to God. This act of devotion transforms our everyday activities into opportunities to honour and serve Him. Just as the ox diligently ploughs the field day after day, we are invited to approach every task and responsibility with dedication, seeing each action as an opportunity to worship God.

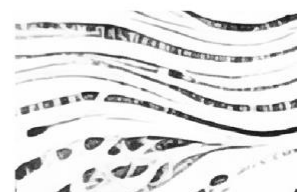
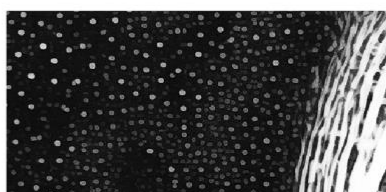
In Romans 12:1, Paul urges believers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – an intentional, deliberate offering of our entire selves. This goes beyond religious rituals and practices; it encompasses all of who we are – our thoughts, actions, and ambitions – all surrendered to God's will.

In Romans 12:2, he expands on this concept by emphasising the renewal of our minds. This transformation occurs as we align our thoughts and perspectives with God's truth and purpose, discerning what is good, pleasing, and perfect to Him.

It challenges us to break away from conformity to worldly patterns and instead be transformed by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, sacrificial worship transforms our perception of daily tasks and ‘real-life’ challenges. Whether in our professional, relational or personal lives, every activity becomes an opportunity to glorify God through obedient service and unwavering faith.

In Mark 10:42-44, we are challenged to embrace servanthood as Jesus did, putting others before ourselves. By doing this, we mirror Christ's ministry of humble service and sacrifice.





In Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus invites us to take His yoke upon ourselves. This yoke signifies partnership and shared purpose. When we yoke ourselves with Christ, we align our lives with His mission, finding fulfilment and purpose in serving others (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV).

In the agricultural context of Jesus' time, the yoke was a common agricultural implement. It was a wooden crosspiece that connected two oxen, harnessing their combined power in a single direction, enabling them to work together in ploughing a field, pulling a cart or moving a heavy load. These oxen would usually be paired with one older, experienced ox and one younger, less experienced ox. Initially, the younger ox would not feel comfortable under the yoke, but it would soon learn to stop resisting. Before long, it would take the more experienced ox's pace, and they would start to work together, walking in step with one another.

Jesus uses this imagery to illustrate a powerful spiritual truth: As we align our lives with His teachings, His mission, and His character, we enter into a partnership with Him. This partnership involves learning from Him, walking alongside Him, and participating in His mission of redemption and restoration.

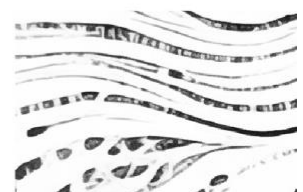
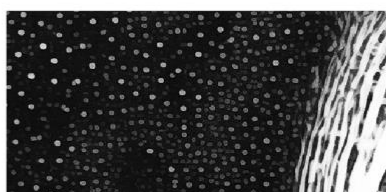
Who are you yoked to? Jesus wants us to be yoked with Him, to learn from Him, and to take His pace as we face the challenges of everyday living. Remember, being yoked to Him brings HIS strength into our situation. Being yoked with Him illustrates a close relationship but also a shared mission and purpose in serving God and others.

In John 4:23-24, Jesus is in another conversation on the essence of true worship:
"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." [NIV?]

This profound statement from Jesus underscores that worship is not merely an external act or ritual but a deeply intimate connection with God that goes beyond physical spaces and religious practices. It is about the condition of our hearts and our alignment with God's truth.

As we take up His yoke and learn from Him, we discover that He is truly gentle and 'lowly in heart'. Before long, we realise His yoke is easy (not harsh, demanding, painful or draining); His 'burden' is light. In 'walking in step with Him', we find rest for our souls.

The Ox in the Throne Room draws our attention to another aspect of worship that we find in Scripture. The narratives of Romans 12:1-2 and Genesis 22 intertwine to reveal the essence of sacrificial worship – a complete surrender of our will and desires to God, trusting in His wisdom and provision. This means dedicating our talents, time, and resources to God's service, trusting that He will guide and provide for us in every circumstance.





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May we embark on a journey of deeper worship and sacrificial service. Whether it's in the quiet moments of prayer, the diligent work of serving others, or the daily decisions to honour God above all else – may our lives reflect the transformative power of servanthood. Let's respond to God's call with faith like Abraham, trust like Isaac, and perseverance like Sarah.

Together, let's embrace the dual challenge of sacrificial living and heartfelt worship, knowing that in doing so, we participate in God's redemptive plan for His creation, transforming our understanding of worship from a ritualistic duty into a vibrant relationship with our Creator. This is the way His Kingdom comes. His will gets done on earth, as it is in heaven.

