

# CHRONIC STRESS

"REST FOR THE WEARY"

## Key Passages

- Matthew 11:28-30 "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."
- Isaiah 40:31 "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

## Story

Karen couldn't remember the last time she felt truly relaxed. Even in sleep, part of her stayed alert for seizure alarms or breathing changes. Her shoulders carried permanent tension, her mind constantly calculated next steps: medication schedules, therapy appointments, school meetings. Friends talked about vacation stress or work deadlines—temporary pressures with clear endpoints. But Karen's stress had no finish line.

Chronic stress in special needs parenting isn't stress based on a one time event—it's the steady weight of ongoing vigilance, advocacy, and care. It's the difference between running a sprint and a marathon with no clear finish line. The body and soul weren't designed for perpetual high alert, yet stepping down feels impossible when your child's wellbeing depends on your watchfulness.

Jesus' invitation to the weary isn't just about physical tiredness but soul-deep exhaustion. His "easy yoke" doesn't promise no work but shared burden. When He promises rest, He's not offering escape from responsibility but partnership in carrying it. The key insight: even oxen work more efficiently when properly yoked together.

Rest for the chronically stressed parent isn't always sleep—sometimes it's the peace of knowing you're not carrying everything alone.

## Discussion Qs

1. What aspects of special needs parenting create the most chronic stress in your life?
2. How do you differentiate between healthy vigilance and unhealthy anxiety about your child?
3. What are your early warning signs that stress is reaching an unhealthy level?
4. How has your understanding of rest and renewal changed through this journey?
5. What helps you find moments of peace even in the midst of ongoing responsibilities?

### Dads

1. How does chronic stress affect your role as husband and father to your other children?
2. What healthy outlets help you process stress without withdrawing from your family?
3. How do you balance the need to be strong for your family with your own need for support and rest?

### Moms

1. When you feel overwhelmed by daily demands, what helps you find moments of peace?
2. How do you handle the physical and emotional exhaustion that comes with constant caregiving?
3. What helps you maintain your own identity and interests while managing chronic stress?

### Couples

1. How do you recognize when your spouse is reaching their stress limit and needs support?
2. What systems have you created to ensure both parents get regular rest and renewal?
3. How do you navigate when one spouse's stress response affects the whole family dynamic?

Application: Identify one source of chronic stress and brainstorm three practical ways to address it this month.