



# I will give you rest, come

by Rachel Gotobed



## Messy reflection

**'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 (NRSV)**

The World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement led by Christian women of many traditions who call the faithful together to observe a common day of prayer on the first Friday in March. More than 120 countries participate in an annual day of celebration which brings together people of various races, cultures and traditions sharing God's word and worship.

The 2026 World Day of Prayer service was prepared by an ecumenical group of Christian women from Nigeria. In the service, the Nigerian women focus on the invitation of Jesus found in Matthew 11:28–30 as they call us to come closer to God and find rest in him. In the service, stories from four Nigerian women inspire us to work towards a world without injustice, insecurity, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair. As we trust in God, our burden bearer, we become one body in Christ, receiving and bringing rest to the world.

It was after teaching and performing miracles in Galilee that Jesus shared these comforting words from Matthew 11:28–30. Even though many people questioned him or didn't understand, he kept inviting everyone to see God's kingdom in a new and loving way. His call to 'come and find rest' isn't just about taking a break – it's about discovering a whole new way to live close to God.

In this passage, Jesus gives us a gift: relief from the heavy loads we carry in life. When he says, 'you will find rest for your souls,' it's like a deep breath for our hearts – a promise of peace in the midst of life's struggles.

In Matthew 11:28–30, Jesus helps us understand rest in a new way. It's not about following a bunch of rules – it's a gift of kindness from God that helps us grow and feel whole. He invites us to accept his 'easy yoke,' which isn't a burden, but a way to live freely and joyfully.

In knowing this rest for ourselves, we are encouraged to come alongside others in their struggles and to show love and kindness however we can. The apostle Paul says exactly this in Galatians 6:2 when he writes: 'When anyone among you has troubles, you must help each other. If you do that, you will be obeying Christ's rule' (EASY).

We are grateful to the Christian women of Nigeria for the service they prepared and, as we share in this Messy Church, we pray that we will all be encouraged to unite as one in both prayer and action with them, and with others around the world.

## #discipleship: team

### How does this session help people grow in Christ?

None of us can escape the worries and pressures of everyday life, but as followers of Jesus we don't have to carry them alone. We can pray to God about them and look to help others as we share life together. The Bible also speaks frequently of our need for rest, and that true rest is found only in God. As followers of Jesus, we can trust that God knows our needs and that when we choose to rest in him, we are placing ourselves in his love, knowing that all will be well whatever happens.

## #discipleship: families

### Mealttime card

- What does the word 'rest' mean to you? When and how do you rest?
- How easy do you find it to rest knowing that God can be trusted in all areas of your life?
- What have you learned today about giving your burdens to God? How will you try to do this better?
- What is one thing you can do to share the burdens of someone you know?



BRF Ministries, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE  
+44 (0)1865 319700 | enquiries@brf.org.uk  
brf.org.uk

The Messy Church® name and logo are registered trade marks of Bible Reading Fellowship, a charity (233280) and company limited by guarantee (301324), registered in England and Wales



# I will give you rest, come

by Rachel Gotobed



## Take-home idea

Activities 2, 8 and 9.

Nigeria has a national pledge:

*I pledge to Nigeria my country  
to be faithful, loyal and honest,  
to serve Nigeria with all my strength,  
to defend her unity,  
and uphold her glory and honour.  
So help me God.*

I wonder what pledges members of your family have made? For example, has anyone in your family: joined Rainbows or Cubs; become a member of a sporting team; signed a contract for a job or volunteering role; been married; rented/bought a house?

We make a lot of promises and this prayer is a reminder of the promises we can find in knowing Jesus – promises of God's care, peace, joy and rest. Maybe you can pray this prayer as a family this week:

Dear Jesus

*We come before you today, casting all our cares upon you,  
because you care for us.*

*We pray for your peace, joy and contentment as we rest in your love. Thank you Father.*

*In Jesus name. Amen.*

(by Dorritt Akinbobola – Together in Prayer)

## Questions to start and end the session

So... what does it mean to find rest for our souls, and how can we do this better?

## Social action

Galatians 6:2 (EASY) says: 'When anyone among you has troubles, you must help each other. If you do that, you will be obeying Christ's rule.' Can you think of any ways that you can show your care for people who are struggling? Could you make a donation to the local food bank or do something to fundraise for a charity that helps people who are in need? We can also show care by offering our time – you could babysit for a family, go and do someone's food shop for them or just keep someone company one evening so they are not lonely.

## Activities

### 1. Prayer never stops – it's global

**You will need: globe or map of the world; list of world time zones; copy of the hymn 'The day thou gavest'; verse three of the hymn printed on a bookmark/postcard; coloured pens; stickers**

Share together how each new day first commences in the islands east of New Zealand and get people to find Samoa (not American Samoa) on the map/globe. Now get them to slowly trace their finger west to find Nigeria and explain that it is the women of this country that have prepared the World Day of Prayer service for 2026 that forms the subject of our Messy Church session today. Ask them to then find the country they live in. What is the time difference between Nigeria and where they live? Finally, find American Samoa, as this is where each day ends. Explain how it is exactly the same time in American Samoa as it is in Samoa, but they are always a full day apart!

Decorate the bookmark/postcard and write on the back 'Someone, somewhere is always praying.'

**Talk about** how the World Day of Prayer is a global movement led by women, and that on the first Friday in March each year, special prayers are prayed starting in Samoa and, 146 countries later, ending in American Samoa. Each year, the old hymn 'The day thou gavest' is sung during the service. Verse three says the 'voice of prayer is never silent', meaning there is always someone praying somewhere in the world all of the time!

**I wonder...** how it makes you feel to know that all around the world there is someone praying every second of the day.

### 2. Make a Nigerian flag

**You will need: green paint; colouring or collage materials; paper flag template; stick; sticky tape**

Make a Nigerian flag by painting or colouring the two outer bands green and keeping the central band white. Add a stick using sticky tape to be the flagpole.

**Talk about** how the Nigerian flag was adopted on 1 October 1960 to mark their independence and was chosen out of over three thousand designs that were entered as part of a



# I will give you rest, come

by Rachel Gotobed



government competition. It was designed by a man called Michael Taiwo Akinkunmi – the two green stripes represent the country's rich agriculture and the white stripe symbolises peace and unity. You can find more background information on Nigeria here – [wwdp.org.uk/2026-theme-and-country-nigeria](http://wwdp.org.uk/2026-theme-and-country-nigeria).

**I wonder...** what it's like to live and to follow Jesus in Nigeria?

### 3. Sleep mask

**You will need:** felt material; thin elastic; eye mask template; sequins, gems and other things to decorate with; PVA glue; pins; pen

Create a simple sleep mask. Pin on or draw around the eye mask template and cut out – some people may need help with this, or it might be easier to have some pre-cut. Decorate the mask by gluing on sequins, gems, felt shapes. etc. Measure the elastic to fit the person's head and then attach to the mask by making a small hole to thread the elastic through and tie.

**Talk about** how sleep is important for our well-being as it allows our body and mind to recharge, repair and to store our memories. Look together at the sleepy time quiz in the World Day of Prayer children's activity sheet ([wwdp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/CA-2026-Nigeria-download.pdf](http://wwdp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/CA-2026-Nigeria-download.pdf)) to discover more about sleep and how important it is.

**I wonder...** if there has been a time when you couldn't sleep? How did it make you feel?

### 4. 'I am very good' mirrors

**You will need:** mirror card or aluminium foil; coloured card; lolly sticks; sticky tape; stickers to decorate; coloured pens

Make a simple mirror by sticking a mirror card or some aluminium foil on to a rectangle of coloured card. Write at the top 'I am very good' and then decorate the border using stickers, etc. Attach a lolly stick to the back using sticky tape.

**Talk about** how the Bible tells us that when God created people God looked at them and said they were the 'very good' part of God's whole creation (Genesis 1:31). This means that each of us is precious, simply because God created us and that our worth doesn't come from how much we do or how busy we are but purely because God loves us. This means we can rest in God's love, always.

**I wonder...** why God said the people – including us – are very good? What do you think is very good about you?

### 5. FROG stones

**You will need:** stones; acrylic paint or markers; paintbrushes

Decorate a stone using paint or markers. Be sure to include the word FROG on your stone. You could include the Nigerian flag on your design, decorate your stone to look like a frog or use bright vibrant colours that are used in Nigerian textiles.

**Talk about** how the stone represents the rich mineral resources found in Nigeria and how the word FROG can help us remember the truth that we can always Fully Rely On God. All of us are sometimes sad, worried or scared but if we Fully Rely On God we can pray and ask for God's help because God promises to always be with us.

**I wonder...** how it helps to know that you can always Fully Rely On God. Where are you going to put your stone to remind you of this?

### 6. Nigerian butter biscuits

**You will need:** recipe available – [wwdp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Nigerian-Butter-Biscuits.pdf](http://wwdp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Nigerian-Butter-Biscuits.pdf); the various ingredients needed; greaseproof paper; pen; optional decorations

Pre-make at least one batch of this recipe in order that there is some dough already cooling in the fridge while together you mix up the next batch. Give each person a piece of greaseproof paper and write their name on the corner. Then give them two pieces of dough and get them to shape them into biscuits and then prick them with a fork before placing them on a baking tray. The biscuits can be cooked and then collected and eaten as part of the meal.

For an easier option you could make the biscuits in advance and get everyone to decorate them.

**Talk about** how people in different countries eat different foods. Ask them if they know what foods people like to eat in Nigeria? Tell them that they like to eat jollof rice (rice cooked in a rich tomato sauce with onions and pepper) and Suya beef or chicken (thinly stripped and seasoned and cooked over an open charcoal grill). They also like spicy stews and soups, fried plantains and tropical fruits such as watermelon, pineapple and mango. They also like to make butter biscuits.



# I will give you rest, come

by Rachel Gotobed



**I wonder...** what's your favourite thing to eat? We can thank God every day for providing all different foods for us to try.

## 7. Gele game

**You will need:** scarves; bowl; items to put in bowl (e.g. bean bags or soft balls)

Get people from different generations to work in pairs and create a headdress that is a ring shape – you can find a video demonstrating how to do this here – [wwdp.org.uk/2026-spotlight-on](http://wwdp.org.uk/2026-spotlight-on). You should be able to place a lightweight bowl in the ring and balance it on your head. Place some beanbags or soft balls in the bowl and have a race to see who can carry the most items the furthest without dropping any.

**Talk about** how Nigerian women from the Yoruba tribe wear a headdress called a gele. It is worn on Sundays to go to church and on other special occasions. Women in Nigeria still face many challenges around gender discrimination and inequality, and girls tend to get fewer educational opportunities. However, it is often the women who work to provide for their families as well as managing their homes, but many families still live in poverty. Christian women also face persecution for their faith, but the World Day of Prayer provides a platform for the social, political and religious issues affecting them and their families.

**I wonder...** is there something we can do to help and support the women and girls living in Nigeria?

## 8. Gloop

**You will need:** large flat plastic basin or tray; cornflour or custard powder; tablespoon measurer; water; food colouring; small pots with lids; aprons; spoons; newspaper; soapy water to wash hands; towels

Add 4–6 tablespoons for cornflour or custard powder to a basin and then gradually add water to make a thick liquid. Add food colouring if you want. Explore and play with the gloop and let it slip through your fingers. Is it solid or liquid? What happens when you try and pick it up? Put your gloop into a lidded pot to take home if you want.

**Talk about** how cornflour does not dissolve in water but rather makes a suspension called a non-Newtonian fluid. When we press it together it feels solid but when the force is removed it becomes runny again. We can change too when we feel stressed or unable to do something – it might make us

angry or sad. Jesus offers to help us if we come to him when we feel these things and promises to give us rest.

**I wonder...** have you ever felt stressed, perhaps about something at school or at work? How did that change you?

## 9. Light or heavy challenge

**You will need:** a range of objects and items that weigh different amounts; kitchen scales; timer

Explain that they have two minutes to put the items in order from lightest to heaviest. Now get them to weigh them using kitchen scales to see if they are right.

**Talk about** how sometimes things happen that can impact our well-being – it might be illness or worry about exams, it might be being bullied or an argument with a friend. The Bible uses the word burdens to describe things like this, and they can feel heavy and make us weary and upset. Jesus promises in Matthew 11:28 that we can find rest by bringing to him the things that feel heavy and burden us.

**I wonder...** what the heaviest thing is you have ever tried to lift? Could you do it on your own, or did you need help?

## 10. World Day of Prayer discovery zone

**You will need:** copies of the activity sheets for children and youth and the FROG colouring sheet ([wwdp.org.uk/2026-wdp-resources-to-download](http://wwdp.org.uk/2026-wdp-resources-to-download)); pens; optional – fried plantain, watermelon, pineapple, mango to taste

Create a World Day of Prayer display and print off resources for people to read and use. It would be good to have some of the food ideas to try too. Find out how you can get involved with World Day Of Prayer locally – [wwdp.org.uk/services](http://wwdp.org.uk/services).

**Talk about** how this year's World Day of Prayer has been planned and prepared by the women of Nigeria. Point out some of the facts in the material provided and suggest people complete some of the activities on the sheets, e.g. the wordsearch. Offer them the Nigerian snacks to try while they are discovering more about this year's World Day of Prayer.

**I wonder...** what you have learned about living in Nigeria. How is it different to living where you live?



# I will give you rest, come

by Rachel Gotobed



## Celebration

*Place the following items in a backpack – these could be some of the ones used in the light or heavy activity: tin of food, school book, calculator, mirror, mobile phone, first aid kit.*

Sometimes things happen in our lives that make us feel weary, tired, anxious, worried or sad. The Bible calls these things burdens and it can feel like we are carrying a heavy backpack that weighs us down.

Let's look in this backpack to help us think about what some of those burdens might be.

Tin of food – not having enough to eat  
First aid kit – illness or disability  
School book – problems at work or school  
Mirror – what we look like  
Calculator – money worries  
Mobile phone – what others think of me

All of us feel some of these worries and stresses at times, and we have seen today that this is true not just for us, but also for people who live in Nigeria, and in fact, for people all around the world.

In Matthew 11:28–30 (MSG) Jesus says:

**'Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.'**

In this year's World Day of Prayer service, the women of Nigeria don't focus on the things that burden them, but instead they help us to see how we can come to Jesus with all of these things and trust that because God loves us all very much, that we can ask Jesus to help us in our struggles and to receive his promise of rest.

They also challenge us to share each other's burdens by helping one another and finding a sense of true belonging and renewed strength as we share life together within the embrace of God's love. The apostle Paul says this in Galatians 6:2 when he writes: 'When anyone among you has troubles,

you must help each other. If you do that, you will be obeying Christ's rule' (EASY).

Even when we face the most difficult times, we can always pray and ask for God's help, for ourselves and for others, and be sure that God is always there to help.

Pass round a backpack of rocks and invite people to take one to represent any burdens they are feeling just now, or to symbolise those of the women and girls of Nigeria. Play the video song, 'I cast all my cares' ([youtu.be/sJLbxwptf7w](https://youtu.be/sJLbxwptf7w)) and invite people to give these worries and stresses to God by coming to put the rock at the foot of the cross.

## Offering

*You could ask people to come prepared to give in a special offering today and get them to dance to the Nigerian women singing 'Keleya' found here – [wwdp.org.uk/2026-spotlight-on](https://wwdp.org.uk/2026-spotlight-on).*

In Nigerian churches it's customary for people to dance their offerings forward, expressing joy in giving and celebrating God's provision. This act of dancing is a reminder that giving is not a burden but a joyful response to God's grace. This special offering we are giving today is to support the ministry of World Day of Prayer and help address some of the burdens we've thought about today. So whether you dance, walk or remain seated as you give, let our offerings be a symbol of our commitment to lightening the loads of others and may our gifts, like our prayers, be a tangible expression of God's love in the world.

## I wonder...

- What have you learned today that will make a difference to your life?
- How are you going to share the burdens of someone you know?
- What might you do to help other people around the world?





# I will give you rest, come

by Rachel Gotobed



## Prayer

**Leader:** God of the poor, we cry out to you to help families who are struggling to meet their basic needs. We give thanks and praise for all those who keep moving forward despite even the most difficult circumstances.

**All:** God, giver of life, continue to strengthen and comfort all who are weary from the burdens of life and direct the hearts of those who can help.

**Leader:** Loving Jesus, compassionate healer, we lift up those who live with poor mental health, often made worse by poverty, stress and daily life. Walk with them and show them that their lives have immeasurable value. Help us to create societies that respect and care for all.

**All:** Loving Jesus, you called us to come with all the burdens that weigh us down. Here we are! Help us to cast our cares on you and lighten these loads.

**Leader:** Holy Spirit, be our comforter in times of distress. Grant us the faith to keep moving forward even when the path seems impossible. When we cannot see a way forward, be our guide.

**All:** Help us to be a light to others, sharing hope and extending a helping hand where we can. We trust in your promise that you will never leave us or forsake us. Amen.

## Song suggestions

Teach everyone to say 'Keleya, Keleya nobueze', which means 'Give him thanks, he is king', then sing the traditional Igbo song together, which you can find here – [wwdp.org.uk/2026-spotlight-on](http://wwdp.org.uk/2026-spotlight-on).

'Friend of God' – Israel Houghton

'In Christ alone' – Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

'I cast all my cares upon you' – Debbie Kerner and Ernie Rettino

'The day thou gavest' – John Ellerton

## Meal suggestion

Something with rice such as a chicken stew or curry. Soup and bread. Fruit salad or skewers, including mango, pineapple and watermelon. Nigerian butter biscuits made in the activity.

You can access further downloadable resources for 2026 World Day of Prayer service here – [wwdp.org.uk/2026-wwdp-resources-to-download](http://wwdp.org.uk/2026-wwdp-resources-to-download).

Find out how you can get involved with World Day of Prayer locally, look here – [wwdp.org.uk/services](http://wwdp.org.uk/services).

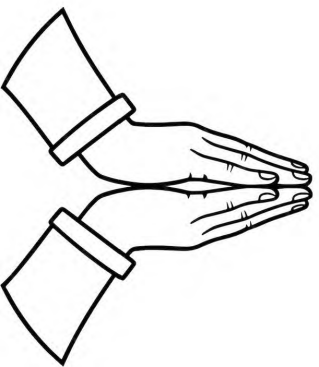
You will find below templates to use for activities 1, 2 and 3.

Scripture quotations marked with the following abbreviations are taken from the version shown. NRSV: the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. EASY: EasyEnglish Bible Copyright © MissionAssist 2019 – Charitable Incorporated Organisation 1162807. Used by permission. All rights reserved. MSG: The Message, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

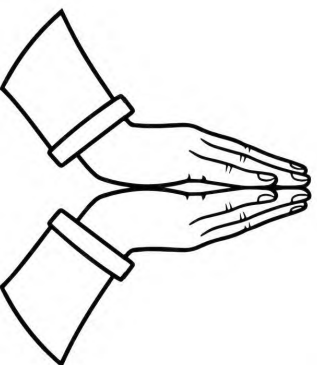
As a charity, we rely on fundraising and gifts in wills to deliver Anna chaplaincy, BRF Resources, Messy church and Parenting for Faith. We've been able to provide this resource free of charge thanks to the generosity of others. If you've benefited from our work, please help more people to do the same.

[brf.org.uk/give](http://brf.org.uk/give) +44 (0)1235 462305

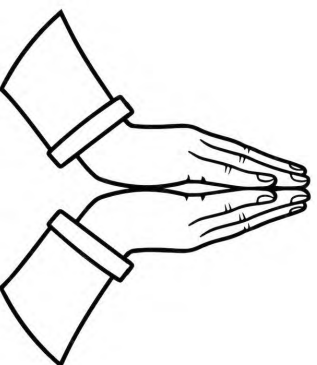
**As over continent  
and island  
each dawn leads to  
another day,  
the voice of prayer  
is never silent,  
nor do the praises  
die away.**



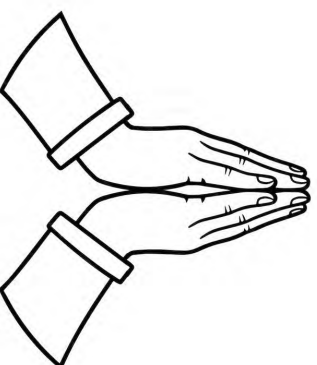
**As over continent  
and island  
each dawn leads to  
another day,  
the voice of prayer  
is never silent,  
nor do the praises  
die away.**



**As over continent  
and island  
each dawn leads to  
another day,  
the voice of prayer  
is never silent,  
nor do the praises  
die away.**



**As over continent  
and island  
each dawn leads to  
another day,  
the voice of prayer  
is never silent,  
nor do the praises  
die away.**



Nigerian flag template



