



The Scripture:

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 11:29-30).

The thought:

Those familiar with agriculture and the use of animals for cultivation will be familiar with the concept of a yoke. City dwellers may not understand. A yoke is an implement used to hook two animals, such as oxen, together so that they can pull a plow or a wagon jointly. Harnessed together by a yoke, these animals combine to increase the power available to accomplish the task.

Over the centuries, yokes have been carved out of wood. A master woodworker could make a yoke that was an exact fit for the two animal that were to wear it. It would be designed in such a way as to avoid chafing and unevenness so that the animals could pull using their full strength and not be pained by a poorly designed connection to the load—the plow or the wagon. Such a well-designed yoke would be described as “easy.” An easy yoke would make for a lighter burden.

Jesus does not want our relationship with him to be a burden but a blessing and a joy. He has prepared for us an easy yoke. When we hear Jesus speaking of a light yoke we need to remember that he was a carpenter who probably had a lot of experience in making easy and light yokes.

Another beautiful picture to contemplate is that of being in a yoke together with Jesus. Jesus is pulling his share and it may be that my yoke is easier and my burden is lighter because he is pulling more than his share!

The song:

*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me down to lie
In pastures green He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.*

*His yoke is easy; His burden is light.
I've found it so; I've found it so.
He leadeth me by day and by night
Where living waters flow.*

*My soul crieth out: "Restore me again,
And give me the strength to take
The narrow path of righteousness,
E'en for His own Name's sake."
--Ralph E. Hudson (1885)*

The question:

How have the heavy loads of life been lightened by the joy of Jesus? In what ways am I restored by my "yoked relationship" with Jesus?

The experience:

Sometimes we see a picture of a yoke made for a person. A piece of wood is carved to fit across human shoulders so that water buckets or baskets can be balanced and carried more easily over distance.

As a child, I did not have that kind of yoke. But I did have two "yokes" to carry. One yoke was that on some days I did have to ride a bicycle to a distant neighbor to get two bottles of milk—the daily family supply. The bottle carrier was permanently fixed to my brother's bicycle so I had no choice but to use that bike even though it was too big and more difficult to manage. Somehow I managed to get the milk home when it was my turn. Unfortunately, in this case my yoke was not light!

The other "yoke"—or burdensome task—was pumping water. Since we had no electricity, I would have to start the balky petrol (gasoline) engine (much like a lawn mower) and hope that the four-inch belt which ran from the motor to the pump would stay on the pulleys as I applied the big clutch lever. Often the belt would jump off and I would have to turn off the motor and start again. There was a block of bitumen which we applied to the inside of the belt to make it a little more sticky. Sometimes that helped and sometimes it did not. Once everything was up and running, I would have to wait until the 500-gallon elevated tank was full and then my job was over until the next time. I was only eleven at the time.

Overall "my yoke" was lighter than many other young lads who had to handle a manual pump or those who had to chop wood for the stove. As for the wood supply, I

only had to collect kindling sticks which fell from the blue gum (eucalyptus) trees along the edge of the property.

Whatever our tasks, doing them with Jesus as a companion does make them easier and lighter.