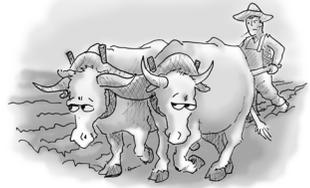


Clear as mud, right? How many of us know anything about yokes, or oxen, or farming? Ninety-eight percent of us live in cities or suburbia. Even if we are farmers, we use combines and tractors. An important lesson here: if you don't get the Bible, ask questions. It's really worth the effort to learn a little bit about the context and content of its stories because then you can say, "Oh. I get it!" So, let's do a little research about these things, otherwise we just let our 21st century way of thinking get in the way.



Here are some 1st Century farming tidbits you didn't know about:

- Yokes were made of wood and fitted to the particular ox; as the ox grew, new yokes were made to fit.
- A well-fitted yoke was comfortable, not irritating, like a good pair of shoes.
- When its natural power was harnessed with a yoke, an ox could work harder and produce more. Left to its own devices it crushed stuff and basically wreaked havoc in the field.
- Normally two oxen were yoked side by side.
- With the yoke, the ox was able to do something it could not accomplish alone—be productive and even play a role in producing its own food.

As long as the yoke fit, this was a fulfilling way to spend a day, as oxen go: get some exercise, provide your future meals, and please your owner who cares for your every need.

Okay, with our context in place let's re-read that Bible passage:

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,  
for I am meek and humble of heart;  
and you will find rest for yourselves.  
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.*  
*Matthew 11:28-30*

Jesus is inviting you to get into his yoke which will be well-fitted and comfortable, not irritating. It will allow you to do things you could never do when left to your own devices and it will keep you from making mistakes as well. He's promising you that your life will be productive and fruitful if you do this. You will create a life-sustaining product if you take on his yoke.

Where, exactly, is Jesus in this yoke metaphor? Let's consider two options: