

When You Wish You Had an Ox

Driving down a country road, I came upon a succession of white farmhouses, crisp red barns and rolling pastures where beef cattle were grazing: black and red angus, belted Galloways and a few Charolais. It was a scene that reminded me of my childhood and people dear to me.

To the descendants of Gershon and Merari, the sight of numerous oxen and carts held a different meaning. These people were part of the tribe of Levi. The Israelites at this time in their history had no permanent temple. They lived like nomads, traveling from place to place in the desert with their flocks and herds. Their temple was a large tent structure aptly named the Tent of Meeting. It was erected inside a temporary wall made of posts and curtains. The temple, or tabernacle, was 45 feet long and 15 feet wide and high. The courtyard was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. It was a big tent.

In Numbers 4:24-33, God gave the Gershonites the responsibility of transporting the curtains and coverings and everything that went with them while traveling. It was their job to take them down and put them up. The Merarites were to carry the posts, bases, crossbars, (the really heavy stuff) ropes and “everything related to their use.” (NIV) No other instruction was given them except that Ithamar the priest was to be their supervisor.

Earlier another group from the tribe of Levi, the Kohathites, were given the responsibility to care for and transport all the things used inside the tabernacle: the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of the Presence, etc. They were to carry these by poles inserted through rings attached to each side. Their instructions included a dire warning to anyone straying from the rules of carriage.

The Gershonites and Merarites, though numbering into the thousands, had to be wondering, *“How are we to carry all this stuff without it getting mixed up or lost?”* It was an awesome responsibility.

But when God delegates a job, He also provides the means to do it. After Moses had dedicated the tabernacle, the leaders from the twelve tribes brought an unusual offering. They brought oxen and carts. Moses may have wondered at first what to do with them, but God was quick to answer. He told Moses to give them to the Gershonites and the Merarites for carrying the “sacred things.”

Sometimes God gives us a job or a responsibility that leaves us wondering how in the world we are going to carry it out? We may not have the talent, the means, the education or the wisdom to do what is placed in front of us. As a homeschooling mom and a parent, I have experienced these doubts. I discovered that success required inviting God into my thoughts and resting in the power of His Word, literally believing what He says about helping us and

providing for us. The work was still hard, but God was right there with me. He will freely give counsel, insight and even oxen and carts to whoever needs them.

Perhaps you are facing challenges. But what God asks us to do, He will gift us with the skill, wisdom and sheer perseverance to complete the task. All we have to do is trust Him and depend on Him to do it.

What task has God given you that you need His help to accomplish? What are you learning in the process?