

**Where no oxen are, the manger is clean;  
but much increase is by the strength of an ox.  
Proverbs 4:4**

Next, in verse 4. **Where no oxen are, the manger is clean.** That is how it literally reads. **But much increase is by the strength of an ox.** It is true that if you sell off your oxen the stalls are going to be clean. You do not have to clean up after them. The problem with that is that if you have oxen and you have to go through the trouble of cleaning up after them, they produce for you. So you are caught between a rock and a hard place.

You can use logical reasoning to say, "I want to get rid of the trouble of cleaning up after the oxen." After all, it is very inconvenient to have to clean up after oxen, and to clean up after the very animal that is working for you and producing for you. And so if we get away from the inconveniences and the hardships of life, we are also getting away from the very things that are producing for our lives. And so the basic principle here is we are always looking to make things easier. And the things that we try to avoid and the things that we try to get rid of, though they be inconvenient and difficult, yet at the same time they are producing for us, even though it is inconvenience and hardship for us. So we try to make our life easier but we also find ourselves getting rid of the things that are producing for the benefits of our life.

So, the same way with people. You know, there are people you just say, "I could do without them." But then you find out that when they are gone - as big a pain in the neck as they were to you - there was something about their life that was producing for you, that was ministering to you, that was an addition to your life, and good for you. Maybe it is good to be around people that rub us the wrong way. It is inconvenient and it is a hardship, and the Lord brings people into our lives where there is a personality conflict, and you know it is just easier without them. But what God is producing through them to us is of benefit to us.

So the basic principle is, do not take the easy route. Avoid taking the easy route. You can get rid of the oxen, then you do not have to clean up after the mess. But then you do not have what the oxen produce.