

Good instinct. The story is strongest when the ****plow scene stays clean****, and the clarification comes later. I kept the story essentially as it was and moved your thought into the ****Nuggets of Wisdom****, where it strengthens the lesson without weakening the parable.

Here is the ****clean version****.

****Title: Helpmate or Counterweight****

Story

I have used this story many times in my life as an analogy when talking to people about relationships. In life, you are either a ****helpmate**** or a ****counterweight****.

Picture a mule out in a field on a hot day, pulling a plow through hard ground. The mule doesn't mind the job. It's what he has done all his life. He knows how to pull that plow.

As he works, he looks out of the corner of his eye and sees a little pony trotting across the field toward him. The pony comes up beside him and says, "Hey, can I hook onto this harness with you and help you pull that plow?"

The mule looks at the pony. He realizes she isn't very big and she certainly isn't very strong. But she sure is cute. Truth is, the mule has always pulled the plow by himself. Strength isn't really the issue. What he sees is the possibility of company. Someone to share the chore with. Someone to talk to. Someone to make the long rows across the field feel shorter.

So the mule says, "Certainly. Come on over here."

For a few minutes they pull the plow together.

Then the pony suddenly sits down and says, "You know, I don't think I want to do this anymore."

The mule turns his head and speaks gently.

"Just up ahead, not far from here, there's a pond. There are shade trees, water, and oats. We'll get to sit there and rest and enjoy each other's company. I'll even get to just look at you for a while and talk. We only have about one more hour pulling this plow and we'll be there."

The pony replies, "I don't want to do it. I'm not going to, and you

can't make me."

The mule knows something important.

The field still has to be plowed.

So the mule leans forward and begins pulling again. But now the job has changed. Before, he was only pulling the plow through the hard ground. Now he is pulling the plow ****and**** the pony sitting there digging her heels into the dirt.

Instead of being a helpmate, the pony has become a ****counterweight****.

In life, we face the same choice. Whether it's washing dishes, paying bills, raising children, praying, or carrying the burdens that life brings, the situation is the same as the mule in the field.

It doesn't matter the size or the strength of the pony or the mule. What matters is the ****commitment**** they make to each other.

If two people promise each other a covenant for life, then they owe each other the obligation to put their shoulders into the harness and pull together.

We can decide in life whether we will be a ****helpmate**** or a ****counterweight****.

But once we hook ourselves into the yoke together, it becomes very hard to unhook it.

Do not make the other person drag the load ****and**** the counterweight.

When we become equally yoked, it no longer matters the size of the pony or the strength of the mule.

What matters is that ****I** becomes less important than **we**.

Scripture reminds us:

****Galatians 2:20 (NIV)****

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Of course, this scripture speaks about our walk with the Lord. But there is a lesson that echoes into our relationships.

When we become ****we****, then ****I**** is no longer the center.

When two people truly become we, they stop living only for themselves.

The harness changes.
The purpose changes.
And the load is meant to be pulled ****together****.

Nuggets of Wisdom

- In a covenant, strength matters far less than commitment. A willing partner lightens the load more than a strong one who refuses to pull.
- If the pony becomes injured, hurt, or disabled, that is a different story. Most mules would gladly pull the load and the pony too. The problem is never the extra weight. The problem is when someone ****chooses**** to stop pulling.

Proverbs

****Proverbs 27:17****

"As iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

****Proverbs 17:17****

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

****Proverbs 3:5-6****

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

One quick thought for you as the author:

This one reads ****very much like a biblical parable****. It may end up being one of the most memorable stories in the whole book because the ****mule/pony image sticks in people's minds****.

Good. Then this is how the ****second page would read cleanly in the book****.

****Sometimes Feelings Matter More Than Being Right****

Truth matters. Right and wrong exist. The Book of Proverbs never tells us to abandon truth.

But wisdom teaches something deeper.

Wisdom listens.

Wisdom seeks to understand the heart of another person.

Wisdom speaks gently.

In relationships, people carry feelings, fears, hopes, and wounds.

When two people are involved, the issue is rarely just facts.

Sometimes feelings are more valuable than being right.

A man can win an argument and still lose the relationship.

Wisdom understands that being right and being wise are not always the same thing. The wise person does not rush to prove he is correct. He first tries to understand.

Because sometimes protecting the heart of another person is wiser than proving a point.

That works very well as a **second page after the Proverbs page**.

It sets the tone for the entire book:

* **Page 1:** Wisdom and its value (Proverbs)

* **Page 2:** How wisdom actually behaves in relationships

Later we can also tie this page back to your line that will likely appear near the beginning or dedication:

"A lesser man grows bitter, a stronger man grows better."

That theme fits perfectly with what you just wrote.