

Peter - God's Goad for True Believers

by Evans Rector

“The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails,
given by one Shepherd.” (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

Intro

In ancient times, farmers used a long stick with a pointed metal end to ‘goad’ their animals (mostly oxen) as they plowed their fields. This prodding was two-fold in purpose: (1) To redirect them if they were veering off path, and (2) To quicken their pace in the event they were going too slow or weren’t putting forth enough effort.

In his book titled, ‘So You Want to Be Like Christ? – Eight Essentials to Get You There,’ Chuck Swindoll recounts a compelling response from Tom Landry (*legendary coach of the Dallas Cowboys professional football team*) when asked how he was able to forge a team out of individuals so that they would win. After pausing a moment he said: “My job is to get men to do what they don’t want to do in order to achieve what they’ve always wanted to achieve.”

An interesting perspective as to how well he understood his players’ *natural tendencies* and *areas of need*. In other words, he goaded/guided men to perform at their highest potential in order to get the right result.

Faith Words

In ‘The Message’ version of the Ecclesiastes passage, it states: “*The words of the wise prod us to live well. They’re like nails hammered home, holding life together. They are given by God, the one Shepherd.*”

Throughout time, God has used His spoken and written Word (*His Truth*) to goad/guide His people towards a true relationship with Himself. As this true relationship grows, continuing ‘steps of faith’ build upon each other, equipping and preparing us to be useful for His purposes while here on earth.

Christ became our living Word when he came to earth. His primary mission was to call people into a life of righteousness through faith in Him, with the goal being a vibrant life of impact and influence for His Kingdom here, as well as an eternal life with the Father, experienced both now and forever.

In II Peter 1:1-15, Peter, who was chosen by Christ to build the church after His ascension to Heaven, wrote his final message (v. 14) to his readers, “...to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:” (v.1).

What do you think his focus was? Here's how you start and build a healthy church? Here's how you do outreach to the lost? Here's how you help widows, orphans, and prisoners? Here's how to plan an effective short-term mission trip? Here's the best way to recruit for a powerful small group ministry?

Here is what he said: "And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder..." (v.13); "...even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you." (v.12) [An interesting side note, Paul, in writing to Timothy, stated: "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you..." (II Timothy 1:6)]

Peter was not shy. Peter was a force to be reckoned with. Peter was purposed. Peter was more concerned about being faithful to his calling than peoples' opinions or reactions.

So here's what Peter was reminding them of:

- You've been given everything (*needed*) pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him (Christ) (v.3)
- You can escape the corruption that is in the world through lust because the Word empowers His divine nature in you to be an overcomer (v.4)
- Your life will not be useless or unfruitful, if you are diligently participating in the transforming work of God's Word and His Holy Spirit on a daily basis (v.8)

Is he really concerned that these 'people of the same faith' as his, 'who know and are established in the truth,' will actually live lives that are 'useless and unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ'?

Does he really think these 'people of the same faith' might just miss the most important result of this relationship with Christ?

The answer is 'Yes.'

That's why he chose the words he did. In verses 10 and 11 he states: "Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make certain...for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom...will be abundantly supplied to you."

Faith-Step Goadng

In researching synonyms for the word 'goad,' some helpful ones were:

-challenge; encourage; influence; motivate; propel; push; stir; urge-

Remember the farmer's goad had a two-fold purpose: (1) Redirect, and (2) Quicken the pace.
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As “Influencers” in the world for Christ, we can be a goad/guide for men along their personal faith journey, by encouraging them to experience the ‘fruit of abiding’ (*John 15: 5*)...the central message of ‘The Journey’ process. During ‘The Journey’ men are guided to place themselves in close proximity with Christ, their Savior. As they allow him to be their King, abundant Kingdom fruit is produced through this divinely-empowered relationship.

Once you have experienced God’s goading/prodding in your life through strategically-placed people in the midst of divinely-ordained circumstances, the life changing impact from His activity during those times will be a constant reminder of His faithful process of inner transformation, healing, wholeness, and fruit-bearing.

His name was Ted. He lived a Hebrews 13:7 life. He had been placed in my hometown after college through a strange set of circumstances, very few of them making any sense. He was right-purposed in his relationships. He was a faith-mentor, discipler, friend, counselor, transparent husband, father and son. Few men have impacted my early faith-life more than he did.

Of the many books, studies, gatherings, and life events that were shared together, one of the most memorable ‘prodding moments’ for a growth step in my faith was when I heard news that he had an employee fatally injured in a work-related accident.

I was frozen, paralyzed (*i.e., natural tendency*) as to how to reach out and actually help + minister, as a brother in Christ (*i.e., area of need*).

You see I was very comfortable learning, memorizing, sharing, listening, and participating in most group activities. It was now time to live out this ‘bearing one another’s burdens’ spoken of in Galatians 6:2.

God’s prodding was a simple, ‘Pick up the phone and call him.’ Having no idea what to say, and hoping he wouldn’t answer, I found myself experiencing an amazing strength and peace as I said, “Ted, I am so sorry for what happened. I have no idea what to say.” His reply was one of grace and encouragement. “Thank you for calling, Evans. This is really a hard time for me, but it means a lot for you to call.” I then listened for a while as he recounted many details of the incident and what steps he needed to take going forward.

That’s it. When you know what you need to do (*to express Christ’s love for the broken and hurting*), you just do it. It’s actually God’s doing. I was simply experiencing Him at work in and through me.

Final Goad Questions

Am I being goaded by God’s divinely-provided methods/tools to be more fruitful for the Kingdom?

Am I being a Godly goad to others in my life as they continue to take their faith steps?