

Kicking Against the Goats

Many years ago, our friend and lawyer LeRoy Labarre gave us a recording of several episodes of a television show he particularly liked, called "Connections", from PBS. Each episode started with one story and by a strange series of connections led to a totally unrelated story, which wasn't "totally" unrelated at all.

I have my own story of Connections, in a way, starting with Ray Bentley's column nearby, "Kicking and Struggling Into the Kingdom." Pastor Bentley refers to the story of Paul the Apostle, then named Saul, who resisted Jesus' claim to be the long-awaited Savior, to the point of hunting down, imprisoning, and even killing those who did believe in Him. Paul clung to the religious doctrines and system he'd been



taught, blind to the fact that everything he'd learned pointed to Jesus.

Connection #1. Although I don't claim to be a religious scholar, especially at the level of an up-and-coming Pharisee in the time of Jesus, I relate to Paul's story, since I have always described my original journey to becoming a Believer and then a Follower of Christ as my being brought along kicking and screaming all the way. I held out from God for as long as I could.

When I was in Junior High School, and then High School, I clung to my personal "doctrine" that I MUST go to college, and so I pushed aside God's Spirit telling me that I should consider what God might want me to do. I WAS GOING TO GO TO COLLEGE. PERIOD.

When my folks left Indianapolis for San Bernardino to work for Campus Crusade for Christ, I decided to stay behind in Indianapolis by myself for my last year of high school. (Nowadays, I wish I'd stayed there.) I WAS GOING TO FINISH HIGH SCHOOL AT HOME, IN INDIANAPOLIS. (I wasn't stubborn, you see.)

When my folks gave up on Campus Crusade after a disagreement in which Bill Bright forbade my dad from talking of the Holy Spirit for fear of upsetting the donors, they ended up meeting with other Believers in a small group, and then buying the little market in Reche Canyon called the Hitchin Post, in obedience to God. I had just started Westmont College and had no intention of giving that up or cutting it short. (Arrogant brat, huh?)

Finally, near the end of my four years at Westmont, I so didn't want to join my folks' group who were running the store as God's mission at that time that I made up plans for graduate school. I would go "somewhere" (anywhere) and earn a master's degree in Library Science (Library "Science"???? What the heck is that, and what is "scientific" about it?) ANYTHING to avoid going to Reche Canyon, where one of my professors said I would go to rot.

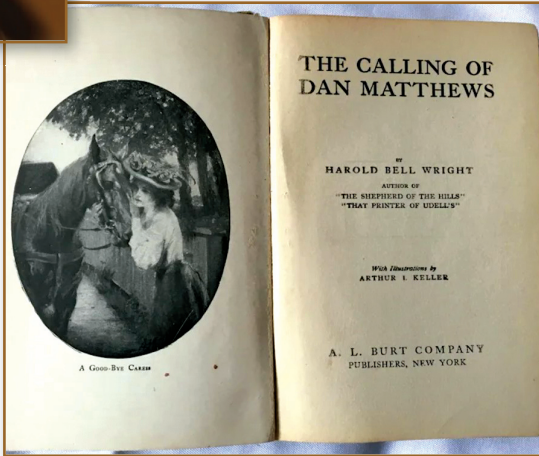
Thank God that He put up with my little tantrums, and probably laughed at me a little, but He stuck by me and didn't let me go. Did I have that "Road to Damascus" experience, with a bright flash of light and the voice of Jesus asking me what the heck I thought I was doing by resisting Him so long? No. But in my Senior year at Westmont, I finally surrendered and then gave one of ten chapel talks about my choice to obey God by going to "rot in Reche Canyon."

I finally stopped kicking against the goads. I could see that Westmont taught that a person could choose their direction in life and then invoke God's blessing, rather than to seek God's will for their lives and then do it in obedience. You can see that my attitude of sheer stubborn determination had changed.

Connection #2: Anne, our Store Manager, mentioned to me an author who wrote novels in the early 1900s, Harold Bell Wright, and she passed on to me the following quote: "It is not the spirit of wealth, of learning, or of

culture that can make the church of value, or a power for good in the world, but the spirit of Christ only. It is not in fidelity to the past but in fidelity to the present that the church can be Christian. It is not the opinion of man, but the eternal truths of God that can make it a sacred, holy thing. It is holy to the degree that God is in it. God is as truly in the fields of grain, in the forests, in the mines, and in those laws of Nature by which men convert the product of field and forest and mine into the necessities of life. Therefore these are as truly holy as this institution [the church]. Therefore, again, the ministry of farm, and mine, and factory, and shop; of mill, and railroad, and store, and office, and wherever men toil with strength of body or strength of mind for that which makes for the best life of their kind—that ministry is sacred and holy. —From The Calling of Dan Matthews by Harold Bell Wright

Anne thought that quote profound and expressive of the Spirit of God that led my folks and others of us to enter the grocery business, sheerly out of obedience but also as a non-religious way to serve common folks rather than to play church. One of Wright's book is called



"God and the Grocery Man". Sounds like he would have understood "rotting in Reche Canyon" rather than serving the religious institution.

Connection #3: We also looked up Wright's brief biography in Wikipedia and found that he spent one year at Hiram College in Ohio. In my junior year of high school, my folks and I traveled to Hiram College to look it over as a possible college.

Connection #4: Also in the biography was mentioned that Harold Wright became a pastor in the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, and that he didn't seek it out, but it found him. That is the same denomination in which my dad met God in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. And the same one where he attended seminary in Indianapolis. And the same one in which I questioned churchianity in my early teens, and a strong contributor to my kicking against the goads. I kicked against churchianity, mistaking it for true faith in God as we know Him in Jesus the Christ, by His Holy Spirit, and felt guilty that I was fighting God. I wasn't. I was reacting against those things that God hates. Maybe it was similar to Harold Wright's becoming a pastor, a calling that found him.

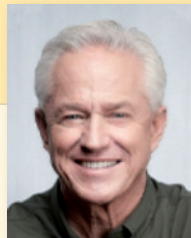
I am so thankful that God didn't let me go, but that He cared enough to hang on to me. He'll hang on to any of us who will let Him!

And remember: a basic principle of algebra is: "If a=b and b=c, then a=c. So if I (a) am connected to Paul the apostle (b), and if I share some things in common with Harold Wright (c), therefore Paul is connected to Wright. (Right?)

Linda Gommel

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

We honor Pastor Ray's life by continuing to share the daily devotions he prepared for you, his precious readers.



Kicking and Struggling Into the Kingdom

Ray Bentley Ministries

"And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'"

—Acts 26:14, ESV

"Kicking against the goads" refers to oxen tilling the soil. The goad is a stick with a pointed spike. If the ox didn't cooperate, the goad prods it. If the ox kicked, the goad is driven deeper into its flesh. The more rebellion, the more suffering.



Paul (originally named Saul) fought Jesus, persecuting and threatening His believers. Jesus finally confronted him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) saying, "Why are you making this so hard? Quit kicking against the goads so I can bless you and we can work together!"

God set into motion certain principles in the universe. We reap what we sow. We pay for stupid choices. We fight Him and hurt ourselves.

Then there is grace.

C.S. Lewis described a classic, modern-day conversion in which he, too, found himself "kicking against the goads."

*"That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me... I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms... who can but duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape? The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men."*¹

Whether it is the moment of conversion or something significant God wants to do in your life, He wants us to fall into His grace and blessings, trusting His love for us.

We are sustained and blessed when we "give in" and follow Him. We are given grace through good and hard times, and the opportunity to use our gifts and talents in ways we could never imagine.

"Jesus tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Bob, why are you resisting me?' I said, 'I'm not resisting you!' He said, 'You gonna follow me?' I said, 'I've never thought about that before!' He said, 'When you're not following me, you're resisting me.'"

—Bob Dylan

1. Lewis, Surprised by Joy (Harcourt, 1966), p. 228

On The Lighter Side . . . from the Web

NEW GREEN DEAL COMPLIANT CARS HIT THE SHOWROOM!



PATRIOTPOST.US: THE BEST HUMOR, MEMES, & CARTOONS

"Ignorance of the law is no defense."

The law:



PATRIOTPOST.US: THE BEST HUMOR, MEMES, & CARTOONS

I've started the raw vegan diet.



I eat three vegans per day and I feel amazing!

PATRIOTPOST.US: THE BEST HUMOR, MEMES, & CARTOONS

Someone asked me if I had any plans for fall.

It took me a moment to realize they meant "autumn" and not the collapse of civilization.



PATRIOTPOST.US: THE BEST HUMOR, MEMES, & CARTOONS

ON THE PORCHES
Roadrunners'
BAKE SALE
Saturday,
April 1st.
8:00 a.m. until Sold Out