How God Guides Us

Lon Whelan 12 April 2018



I'm sure many of us have encountered Botts' Dots thousands of times without even knowing what a Botts' Dot is. It is the raised plastic bump placed in-between or along the painted lines that separate road lanes. In 1953, Dr. Elbert D. Botts came upon the idea of using a raised pavement marker to help make the painted lines separating lanes last longer. The ubiquitous little buttons have since been adopted around the world. In addition to making lanes easier to distinguish, the markers also had an additional (originally unintended) safety benefit: to alert a motorist when they are drifting out of their lane.

> I'm sure those 'dots' have saved me from an almost certain collision on more than one occasion.

I must confess that I can be a 'distracted driver' who has been startled or corrected by Botts' Dots more than once. Driving over them makes an annoying sound, but one for which I am grateful, as I'm sure those 'dots' have saved me from an almost certain collision on more than one occasion.

Am I a ‘Distracted Driver’?

There are times when I hear and feel God doing something similar in my walk with Him. I sense Him nudging me back into the ‘right’ lane because I have taken my eyes off Him and I’m drifting. Maybe I am allowing compromises to taint my purity in Him. Maybe I’m allowing attitudes, indulgences and entitlements to cast a shadow over the light of His Spirit shining in and through me. Am I treating my wife and kids with love and gentleness, or am I being harsh and taking them for granted? Have I cut corners or compromised integrity in my workplace? Do I judge more than I love?

It’s in times like these when it’s the immeasurable kindness of God ‘gently’ reminding us to walk in a greater degree of holiness. ‘Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?’ (Romans 2:4) He will often come alongside us and begin to bring gentle correction. When we listen and adjust, it’s almost like we can hear His applause in heaven.

> The beauty of God is that, like a good shepherd, He will often gently correct us when we begin to veer off.

In John 10, Jesus refers to Himself as the good shepherd. He lays down His life for the sheep. He knows the sheep and they know Him. The sheep obey and follow Him. The beauty of God is that, like a good shepherd, He will often gently correct us when we begin to veer off. Picture a shepherd with the sheep, who carefully uses his staff to keep the sheep together and moving forward towards green pastures and fresh water.

Paul Kicked Against the Goads

In Acts, Jesus appears to Paul on the road to Damascus and asks Paul, ‘Why are you persecuting me? Is it hard for you to kick against the goads?’ (Acts 26:14) Jesus is referring to an ox goad, which was used to keep the ox plowing in the right direction. It was a stick with a sharp, iron point that the farmer would use to prod the animal. At times, the ox would kick against the goad, only driving it deeper into its flesh and causing itself more pain. The farmer’s intention is not to physically damage the ox but to redirect it.

> Jesus was after Paul and was prodding him, but Paul resisted, until He finally took drastic measures

We know that Paul was an enthusiastic persecutor of the Way, but are we aware that Jesus had been poking Paul? We get the sense that Jesus was after Paul and was prodding him, but Paul resisted, until He finally took drastic measures in the form of a roadside encounter and a short time of blindness. When Jesus wants our attention, He has ways of getting it.

Do I Respond to God's Correction?

God is faithful to lead us and His choice is to do it gently, but what happens when we grow deaf to His merciful and still, small voice? A good shepherd cares for His sheep and goes after the one that strays. But when the sheep ignore His prompting, the corrections must become more severe. His love demands it.

> Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards

How are you doing with responding to the gentle correction of the Lord? Are you quick to correct behaviours and attitudes that you know are crossing the line? Are you allowing carnality to slip in unchecked? Song of Solomon 2:15 instructs us to 'Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.'

Or Am I Unyielding?

We can see the fruit of an unwillingness to yield to the leading of God in the lives of men throughout the Bible. We see it in men like Saul and Sampson, and to tragic ends. They were men of high position and calling who refused the correction of God's Spirit, which led to unfulfilled destinies and broken lives.

> Pain is an effective teacher but a most unwelcome one.

Proverbs 15:10 warns that 'There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.' A prayer I often pray for myself and my family comes from Psalm 139:5-6, 'You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.' I pray, Lord, would You hem me in so that whatever direction I turn I will encounter Your presence and voice. Don't let me stray to the right or to the

left.

I want to be quick to respond and adjust. I don't want to force the Lord to 'raise His voice' or use extreme measures to get my attention. Pain is an effective teacher but a most unwelcome one. I prefer the sweet and still, small voice that whispers in my ear to stay in my lane. Stay on the road that leads to righteousness.