

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen
(Old Testament)

Exodus 4:2-4, 20

The Walking Stick

So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), "that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

There's really no science in choosing a walking stick. That was made clear to me when I began researching staffs and rods for this devotion. I guess it's such a personal choice that what one man says, another thinks is wrong. But there is a history to walking sticks that every outdoorsman must know.

It all started in prehistoric times. One day while working in his garden, a man named Grog* was attacked by a ferocious ridiculousaurus.** Little did Grog know that the creature only wanted the beans he was cultivating.

To keep his crop from being trampled in the mayhem, Grog grabbed all the bean poles, with beans attached, and took off. Dino, our affectionate name for the ridiculousaurus, gave pursuit, highly enthused at the prospect of a more spirited way to shop for groceries. As Grog trotted along, the beans fell off of the poles, likely whipped away by the occasional burst of speed needed to keep ahead of his famished pursuer.

Eventually, the beans were lost, leaving the farmer holding two bean poles. Realizing the ridiculousaurus was advancing on him, Grog put the poles to use by thrusting himself forward much like a slalom skier.*** This was appropriate since the man and creature had now run over 20 miles onto the snow pack of a local glacier.

Finally, the man could go no farther. He stopped, turned on the hungry animal, and swung one of the poles. Dino ducked (thus was invented the limbo, but that's another story). In the process of ducking, the ridiculousaurus glanced back and saw the trail of dropped beans. He immediately retreated to the feast of veggies. After all, that was his entire diet in those pre-Flood days.

Grog, realizing the pole had saved him, cherished his running pole. He quickly gathered every sturdy stick he could find and set up a store on U. S. Highway 25 in southern Kentucky, near where beans are still fondly grown. After painting and carving intricate designs on the sticks, Grog sold millions of them to vacationing Michiganders and Floridians. His was a daily trip back and forth to the bank, leaning on one of his poles as he ambled along in his later years. Therefore, he eventually changed the name of his product to "walking stick."****

One wonders what would have happened if the ridiculousaurus had caught Grog. That is why the best variety of beans are called Kentucky Wonders. As it is, because Grog was scared white as a sheet, and because he found it necessary to merely trot rather than run (for as we all know, ridiculousauruses are creeping things), we have a more common variety of beans called White Half Runners. Which, by the way, are very good when cooked by southern moms who are expert at making homemade cornbread.

Now, let's get serious about the Scripture above. Sometimes, the things we have in our hands are the least likely things God will use to get our attention. For Moses, this was a shepherd's rod yet very likely the most valued implement used in his line of work. With it, he counted sheep, protected the flock, divided breeding stock, and steadied himself on steep hills.

Never did Moses think that his rod would turn into a snake. Or that it would cause water to spring from a rock. Or that seas would part when it was held aloft. Or that his obedience to God would be symbolized by the mere wielding of the staff. All of this is God's business: turning human endeavors into holy events.

When Moses took hold of what God declared useful, he found himself in the middle of God's will and plan for his life. With the rod, he traveled where God wanted him to go. He did what God wanted him to do. And he said what God wanted him to say. These are characteristics of walking with God.

What is in your hand? What do you have that God can use for His kingdom? We all know or have heard that God doesn't need anything we have to offer. I'm not sure I completely agree with that. We are, after all, humans living on an earthly planet. That's all we know right now, that is, physical stuff. And it's all we have to work with. God knows that and He wants it, but not in a selfish way. You see, He really doesn't need it for Himself. He just wants to show us how to use it for His glory.

He knows that what we have in our hands are the everyday, ordinary things of life used for tasks like occupations, raising families, and recreation. For outdoorsmen, that might be a fishing pole, a firearm, a carabineer, or a camera. But far beyond all this, God wants our obedience. We give that to Him by admitting to being a sinner and asking for His forgiveness; by believing in His Son's death on a cross and that God Himself raised His Son from being dead; and by confessing His Son, Jesus, as Lord of one's life. None of this has anything to do with what's in our hands, yet everything to do with what's in our hearts.

I can connect with someone outdoors when I have something in my hand that he can see, or when I talk about something we mutually enjoy. It tells that person something about me. Usually, it's an easy way to start a conversation. Like Moses brandished his rod to get noticed, I can use my stuff to get my fellow outdoorsman's attention. Because this is a reality of life, we must be willing to give God our lives AND our stuff. Yet, like Moses tossing down his rod, his earthly lifeline, at God's command, we might have difficulty letting go of some of our things unless convicted to do so by the Holy Spirit.

Later, when Moses used his rod to get people's attention, he quickly followed the gesture by talking about the things of God. That's what we must do with the things that are in our hands. We can enjoy the camaraderie of outdoor hobbies while at the same time moving the topic to the extravagance of God's love. That's easier to do outdoors than anywhere else I know.

When God asks, "What is in your hand?" tell Him what it is. He already knows anyway. He just wants you to agree with Him. Tell Him that it is the most valued item you own. Tell Him that it's all His.

It's a good chance the next thing you'll hear from God is, "Good. Bring it along and let's win your corner of the world for my Son."

* Not his real name. I changed it to protect the privacy of his ancestors since "Grog" was not much of a bean farmer. But he could raise a crop of corn like no one else. Therefore, anonymity for the family.

** Because ridiculousaurus were creeping animals, most could not outrun rising catastrophic flood waters (there were two exceptions, of course). Their remains can be found on display in many museums around the world. Archeologists still cannot (or will not) explain the numerous petrified beans found near each fossilized skeleton.

*** Cliff paintings in China suggest that prehistoric Chinese men invented this form of skiing 100 to 200 centuries ago. No kidding. Reported in *China View*, January 25, 2006.

**** This is the only true form of evolution: the evolving of a crude bean pole into a highly refined walking stick. The truth has been unknown to science, until now.

Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Exodus 4:2-4, 20
The Walking Stick

HOOK

1. What is the most useful item you use outdoors?

2. In what outdoor skill do you excel? Explain how you enjoy it and/or share it with others.

3. List the words you can make from the letters: W A L K I N G S T I C K.

LINE

When Moses took hold of what God declared useful, he found himself in the middle of God's will and plan for his life. With the rod, he traveled where God wanted him to go. He did what God wanted him to do. And he said what God wanted him to say. These are characteristics of walking with God.

God wants our obedience. We give that to Him by admitting to being a sinner and asking for His forgiveness; by believing in His Son's death on a cross and that God Himself raised His Son from being dead; and by confessing His Son, Jesus, as Lord of one's life.

I can connect with someone outdoors when I have something in my hand that he can see. Because this is a reality of life, we must be willing to give God our lives AND our stuff.

We can enjoy the camaraderie of outdoor hobbies while at the same time moving the topic to the extravagance of God's love. That's easier to do outdoors than anywhere else I know.

In what hobby or interest are you involved that has a Christian organization associated with it? How do you enjoy or share this so others can learn about Jesus?

Name three ways you get someone's attention so you can minister or witness to him. Explain how you will improve in each way.

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: rod or walking stick obedience everyday life
