

The Words of the Wise

Goads and Nails

Ecc 12:11 The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.

The use of words communicates intended messages and even unintended messages. Careless words thrown around are not the habit of the wise. The words of the wise are as goads and nails.

A goad, in its simplest definition, is a pointed instrument, usually long, to stimulate a beast to move faster. An ox-goad was used on the back legs of the ox to get him moving. A nail is a small, pointed piece of metal with a head that is driven into boards to fasten and unite.

Notice the contrasts of the two:

Goads prick, while nails fasten.
Goads spur, while nails secure.
Goads get one moving, while nails get one stable.
Goads poke, while nails anchor.
Goads motivate to action, while nails uphold and support.
Goads quicken, while nails hold.
Goads provoke, while nails protect.

It seems to me that preaching is more the ministry of the goad, and teaching is more the ministry of the nail.

Preaching does prick and convict. It is more than jabbing and stabbing. It is not a contest between pricking and kicking. It often does inflict pain, but it is measured with wise words. It intends to provoke to good works and produce a right response.

Teaching also has a point and penetrates, but it primarily does its work on hearts and minds of those who become stilled, similar to nailing two boards together. They are placed with precision in alignment, and then the master can hit the nail on the head to accomplish his task.

The words of the wise are so needed today!

-RWT 1/29/24

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