

## Leadings and Nudges

A friend of mine in Nova Scotia would either drop in to my office or call me from time to time and ask, "Is everything alright? I just got a nudge." "I just got a nudge!"

Does that make sense to you? Do you ever get a nudge? Some people call them "Leadings". It's just a sense, or a feeling, or a hunch. You have done nothing to plant the idea there, it's as if it just came to you. You start wondering about someone. Or you get the feeling that you should drop by someone's home, or give someone a call.

Some people understand this as God's Spirit within them, gently moving or nudging them to a specific thought or action or person.

My friend in Nova Scotia, always claimed that it was God's Spirit that was nudging her - prodding her to take action - make that call, or drop by that person's home.

Is any of this making sense to you? It is not usually a voice, so much as a feeling – a leading, a prompting, a nudge.

There was a time in my life when I was applying for another job. The city was beautiful. The job would have been wonderful. The interview went very well. I was quite confident that they would likely be offering me the job. But as I headed home from my time with these lovely people, I just kept getting this "No" that came from somewhere. Not a voice. It is hard to explain. Just this strong sense that, even though everything seemed to be pointing toward a definite "Yes", I could not escape the "No". I sat with it for a while. I wondered about it. I even fought it for a while. But in the end, for no explanation that I could come up with, I eventually gave in to the NO, and withdrew from the competition. A nudge. A leading. A prompting. A movement of God's Spirit within me.

Have you ever had a nudge, or leading, or prompting. Have you ever felt that God's Spirit was directing your path, or leading you to a particular decision?

I am not much of an Old Testament Scholar, but I have always loved this passage from 1 Samuel.

Samuel was a young boy. He was working and living in the temple. Every year his mother and father would come and visit him when they made their annual pilgrimage there. An old sage named Eli was the senior man of the synagogue and he was Samuel's guardian and mentor.

One night, after Samuel had gone to bed, Samuel heard his name being called- "Samuel, Samuel". Immediately Samuel jumped out of bed and ran to the area of the synagogue where Eli slept. "Here I am, for you have called me." Eli was confused, for in fact, he had not called

the young boy. Eli told Samuel that he had not called him. Samuel returned to his bed. Now Samuel was confused. Not long after he had gone back to bed, Samuel heard the call again, and immediately ran to Eli. Again Eli told Samuel that he had not called him. It happened again. Then the wise Eli said to Samuel, "If you hear the call again, answer by saying, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening". Eli realized that in fact God was calling this child. Soon, Samuel would too. Again the call came. "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening," Samuel replied. Samuel learned that it had been God, not Eli who was trying to get his attention.

I am wondering, how you relate to this. I am wondering what it takes for God to get your attention. I am wondering how you listen, or watch, or avail yourself to God's leading or nudging, or prompting. Have you ever felt that God was speaking to you or at least trying to get your attention?

One of the churchy terms that makes the rounds on occasion is discernment - discerning God's will. Trying to figure out what it is that God wants us to do in a particular situation. Asking questions like, "What would Jesus do? What would God want me to do?" Sometimes we look for signs in an effort to determine God's will.

It's not always immediately identifiable. It is not always black and white. It wasn't for Samuel. He kept thinking it was Eli calling him. It is almost never as clear as we would like it to be.

If you are trying to discern God's will or if you think God might be nudging or leading or prompting you, here are some things to know:

#1. God can speak to anyone. God does not restrict his voice to Christian leaders or spiritual superstars.

#2. God always speaks in ways that are consistent with His character. What does Scripture tell you about the nature of God? Is the act selfish or mean or loving? Is the nudge consistent with what you know about God?

#3. If you have anxious thoughts, it is not from God.

There is so much noise and so much busyness and so much vying for our attention and energy that it is sometimes almost impossible to hear the voice of God or to feel the nudge or to sense that leading!

The passage that was read from Mark 6 is Jesus' invitation to his disciples to quiet their hearts and minds, to take time out, to be still and know that God was with them, "Come away all by yourselves to a deserted place, and rest a while." Jesus knew that in order for his disciples to serve God well, in order for them to hear His voice well and respond, they would need times of solitude – peace and quiet.

**Is it you, / or was it you, / or do you know people** who's days are so busy that they often report that they did not even have time to eat that day? It is not so uncommon! And this is what Jesus knew of his disciples. They were getting so overwhelmed by the demands of others that they often did not have time to get restored. And so He insists that they get into a deserted boat and get away by themselves....Solitude. It is not a good sign of the times when for so many, solitude is a very rare luxury. Solitude is essential in order to get **refreshed** and **renewed** and **restored**. **Solitude enables us** to quiet ourselves enough so that we can hear and feel the presence of God.

How is life for you these days? Is the living slow and easy, flowing like a lazy river? Do you want to move to the Maritimes because you've heard it's a quieter, slower pace down there?

I need a show of hands here - How many of you own a cell phone? How many of you refuse to get a cell phone? Do you remember a time when there was no such thing – the horse and buggy days of telecommunications? Do you wonder how you ever survived ?

When it comes to words like solitude, peace, slowing down, getting restored, retreating.....quieting our lives so that we might hear the voice of God, or at least get a nudge.....how do our cell phones fit into all that?

Have a look at these photos.....look familiar at all?

Here is some data you might find interesting:

12 % of cell phone users take their phone into the shower with them

40 % of cell phone users check their phones while sitting on the toilet

61% tuck their phone under their pillow or next to the bed with the phone turned on

50% feel uneasy when they leave their phones out of reach

77% of parents have argued about cellphone usage with their teens

46% check their work phones while on vacation

26% of car accidents are caused by cellphones

For some it might be cell phones, for others it might be computers or TV, or a host of other things.

We hear the word mindfulness bandied about these days. Focusing. Attending deeply to things. It is difficult to do when we fill our lives with so much stimulation. How can we hear the voice of God in the midst the noise and the busyness? How can we avail ourselves to be able to feel a nudge, a prompt, or a leading? We each need to find solitude in our own way. Jesus called his own disciples away. To be alone and quiet and still. To get renewed and restored. We each need to find our own way and what works for us.

I have just started attending to the daily devotionals by Father Richard Rhor, a Franciscan friar associated with the Center for Action and Contemplation. It is my quiet time. Time to read, and reflect. That works for me and my schedule. That slows me down, helps to quiet me, even for a few minutes each day. What works for you?

Like Samuel, if you are going to be able to hear God's call upon your life, you would do well to heed the words of Jesus, "Come away to a deserted place, all by yourselves and rest a while." It was His words to His disciples. It continues to be His words to us.

God bless you on your journey

Amen