

Watching out for Woozles: The Gospel According to Pooh

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One reason that I believe that Winnie the Pooh is so popular with people is that there is within each of us a desire to explain complex truths in a simple way. Pooh is like that.

In one story, Pooh is searching. He comes across some tracks and starts following them. As he follows them, he notices that they are increasing. We soon realize that Pooh is following the tracks that he himself had left in the snow, but he isn't aware of it. Piglet comes along and asks Pooh what he is doing.

“Hunting”, Pooh replies. “Hunting what?” asked Piglet. “Tracking something,” said Winnie-the-Pooh very mysteriously. “Tracking what?” said Piglet, coming closer... “I shall have to wait until I catch up with it,” said Winnie-the-Pooh. “Now, look there.” He pointed to the ground in front of him. “What do you see there?” “Tracks,” said Piglet. “Paw-marks.” He gave a little squeak of excitement. “Oh, Pooh! Do you think it’s a-a-a Woozle?” “It may be,” said Pooh. “Sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn’t. You never can tell with paw-marks.” (WTP, p.35-37)

Pooh was hunting. He probably started out looking for “honey for his tummy”, because of all the things a Pooh Bear likes, honey is the best. All of us are hunting for something, too. A lot of our energy is spent making ends meet, filling our tummies, and worrying about our checking accounts and the necessities of life. These are important, but we need to remember, “man does not live by bread alone,” nor bears by honey alone, but “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” The Bible reminds us that we must always seek out the word of God, God’s truth for our lives. But how do we know if we are on the right track or simply walking in circles?

In our search for truth, in our search for God, one thing is certain. We are likely to encounter something Pooh and Piglet and the rest of the citizens of the 100 Aker Wood feared more than anything else – woozles. You have to watch out for woozles. Woozles can be frightening. Woozles can be dangerous and woozles can make us turn tail and run back to where we came from.

Woozles come in all shapes and sizes. Many have been distracted in their spiritual journeys by woozles like work, money, sex, alcohol, drugs, or even food. Things like anger, frustration, depression, resentment, or greed can also woozle us. Anything that leads us away from God or promotes misplaced priorities is a woozle.

Sometimes, as was the case with Piglet, they don't even have to be real to work their damage on our souls. Just the idea is enough to make us turn and run. Any emotional distress or fear or worry that saps our spiritual strength can become a big hairy woozle.

Our Christian faith is a journey of discovery. Many times like Pooh, this might involve following mysterious tracks in the snow. Where do they lead, from where did they come, who made them, who put them there for us to see? Perhaps we will follow a leader, as Piglet followed Pooh. Perhaps we will set off on our own, blazing a pathway of spiritual discovery. Perhaps we will follow a map, like the Bible, a discipline, or some spiritual habits that we hope will lead us closer to God. This journey is different for each one of us, but will, by God's grace, eventually lead us to our God who made us and loves us.

As you journey, keep an eye out for woozles, and avoid them as best you can. They are out there, and they lie in wait to side-track us and upset our journey.