

Celebrating fish and puppy dog tales

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Fishermen have been known to exaggerate, but I just returned from a fishing trip to the Bahamas where the fish we caught was bigger than I would have said it was had it gotten away. We landed a 66 pound Dolphin (Mahi Mahi). Can you say church fish fry from one fish?

That made the trip for some of us, but one of the blessings of the trip for my wife was sitting on the porch, taking in the fresh air, reading, and spoiling Abby and Kallie, two Bahamian canine friends we have made over the years during our spring trips to Hope Town. Before Kathy packed her bags for the trip, she packed doggy treats for “the girls”.

While in the Bahamas, we have the girls. At home we have Pepper. Pepper is my four legged child who waits expectantly for me to get home each night and excitedly greets me with whines of delight and great tail wagging when I walk through the door. You can imagine how excited she was when I came home after being gone a week! Words aren't adequate to describe the reception I received.

What is it about dogs that evokes such an enthusiastic outreach? Whatever it is, we know that dogs demonstrate loyalty and obedience, and offer comfort and a sense of well-being. They love us regardless.

Could you imagine what it would be like if we were to have the kind of outreach in our churches, homes, schools and communities that most dogs have? Let me suggest ten ways we can be more Godly in our lives by being more “dogly”.

1. Greet loved ones with wagging tail. The wagging tail affirms that we are home. This is where we belong, where we live, where we're safe, and where we're loved.
2. Eat with gusto and enthusiasm. Dogs know that eating is a celebration of life. When people break bread together, animosities are dissipated, barriers are broken down, and friendships are renewed and strengthened. Eat with gusto. Enjoy all the flavors and spices of creation.
3. On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree. Relax, slow down and enjoy. Unplug and give yourself a time out.
4. Run, romp and play daily. Physical exercise is as important for the soul as it is for the body. When we learn how to play and stretch and get in some exercise we'll feel better from the inside out.
5. Like dogs, be loyal to a fault. Loyalty speaks to our relationship with others - our spouses, our vocation, our community, and our family and friends.
6. When you're happy, dance around and wag your tail. Thankfulness and celebration are powerful dynamics for successful and healthy living, and are gifts we give ourselves.
7. If someone is having a bad day, sit close by and nuzzle gently. We all have bad days. We all need encouragement and affirmation. When we are depressed, we know that it takes only a quiet word, a gentle touch to bring us around. Words are not always needed. A gentle nuzzle speaks volumes.
8. No matter how harshly you're scolded, be willing to run back and make friends. Don't keep a scorecard of rights and wrongs. Carrying grudges is a heavy burden. Forgive and forget.
9. Avoid biting when a simple growl will do. We do not need to injure others by what we say or do. We can be strong with love; firm with kindness.
10. Bark with your buddies. Occasionally running with the pack builds and affirms friendship. Friends are important in our life. A friend is someone who knows the song in our heart and can sing it back to us when we have forgotten the words.

Closing thought: The reason dogs have so many friends is because they wag their tails and not their tongues.

Pastor John, with the 66 pound Dolphin caught in the Bahamas

