

Dog Day Discipleship Discovered

Pastor John Hicks

First United Methodist Church

Two and a half years ago Pepper came into our lives. I walked out of Walmart and this warm fuzzy ball wrapped herself around my ankle. I picked her up and melted as she nestled into my chest. I took her back to the cart where they were giving the puppies away, and told my friend, "I can't keep her, Kathy would kill me if I brought a puppy home."

Long story short, I went home and placed the pup in my wife's lap. Knowing her love of animals would win out over common sense, Pepper became part of our family.

We have learned some interesting things about this dog (besides the fact that she loved to chew on the toes of Kathy's shoes during her first year with us – cost me the price of several pairs of shoes – but that's another story!) Pepper sticks to me like glue. Wherever I go, Pepper wants to go, whether I want her to or not. We go to the living room, she follows. We go to the bedroom, so does she. Go to the kitchen, she's right there. If I want to take a bath in private, I need to shut the door, or Pepper would be right there. Even then, she waits at the door.

Sometimes Kathy wants to say to her, "Hey, listen, leave me alone. You don't have to follow me everywhere!" But one look at those loving eyes and smiling face and it's irresistible. We understand the dog's value system. Pepper doesn't care where she goes or where she is, she just wants to be where her master is.

I've learned a lot about being a disciple from watching our dog. You see, Pepper's big issue is basic: "Where is my master right now?" The dog made her decision where she'll be - wherever her master is. So it is with a disciple of Jesus. Where is my Master on this issue? I don't care where it takes me. I don't care what it costs me. I just want to be where my Master is.

In John 12:26, Jesus says, "Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am My servant also will be." Jesus is talking about the central response of a disciple. "Find out where my master is going and I'm going to go there, too." This kind of allegiance to the Master's direction is what being a disciple is all about. It's not just about having the right beliefs. It's not just about hanging around with the right people. We want to be where our master is as He wants to move deeper into our lives. As He moves in that place where we work, where we play, and where we serve, let us follow His lead there as well. Let us follow where our Master is going and contribute to what He's trying to do.

The key question we need to ask is, "Where does Jesus seem to be going?" When the Board meets, when the committee meets, when we are on our knees praying, we should not just say, "Lord, this is what we want to do." We should ask, "Lord, where are You going in this ministry?" When we go with His flow, it becomes an exciting, dynamic process.

As an added note, remember that we need to stay flexible because we never know where the Master's going to go next. But then that's how that dog follows its master! "Wherever my master is, I will be there – no matter where it takes me!"