

What We Can Learn from Dogs

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Hazel had barely moved or even opened her eyes. It'd been days, and the situation was getting desperate. A call went out for a member of the hospital canine corps.

Moments later, Koyla, a 145-pound shaggy white Great Pyrenees, crawled up on Hazel's hospital bed and snuggled her warm and furry body in next to her patient, who hadn't twitched a muscle for days.

After a short period of time, they noticed Hazel's hand start inching toward the dog. She began to stroke its fur. Within the hour Hazel was smiling and talking, calling the huge dog her friend.

What is it about dogs that evoke such a positive response? Whatever it is, if we were to have the kind of ministry in our churches, homes, and communities that pet partners have in hospitals, what could that look like? What would faithful obedience to the will of God, and a willingness to "come" to the side of others as their advocate mean in the lives of those around us?

God put dogs on earth to remind us of some important truths. Following are 10 dog-truths that will help us grab the robes of sanctification and wear them:

1. Greet loved ones with wagging tail. The wagging tail affirms that this is our home, 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. Breaking bread together is holy. Animosities are dissipated at meals, barriers broken down, friendships renewed and strengthened.
3. On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree. Relax, slow down and enjoy. Give yourself a time out. Opt out, unplug, and get lazy.
4. Run, romp and play daily. Physical exercise is as important for the soul as it is for the body. When we learn to play and stretch and get some exercise, we'll feel better from the inside out.
5. Be loyal. If your dog is nothing else, he is loyal to a fault. Loyalty's a critical element of discipleship, for it speaks to our relationship with others: our spouse, our vocation, our community, and our friends.
6. When you're happy, dance around and wag your tail. Thankfulness and celebration are powerful dynamics for successful and healthy living.
7. If someone is having a bad day, sit close and nuzzle gently. We all have bad days. That's why we need encouragement and affirmation. When depressed, we know that words are not always needed. A gentle nuzzle will often bring us around.
8. No matter how harshly you're scolded, don't pout - run back and make friends. Carrying grudges makes life a drudgery.
9. Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
10. Bark with your buddies. Barking says we belong in this together. We are one.

May we all be dogly Godly!