

THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

An equipping e-newsletter from Man in the Mirror to help you reach more men.



Lessons from a Dog

By Pat Morley

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When Katie, our yellow lab, turned twelve, we bought Annie, a Bijon Frise, to keep her company—and give us a little overlap when Katie died.

Annie is a poofy little curly-haired, snow-white bundle of energy with an insatiable appetite for social contact. She's like an over-caffeinated Chihuahua! Katie, our big dog, would try to nap, but energetic Annie would yap, snip at, and bait Katie until she would finally give in and play. What a great time those two had keeping each other company!

My wife, Patsy, and Annie were always tight, but when Katie finally passed, they became even closer than before. I've learned a lot about God and our relationship with Him by watching Patsy and Annie.

Forgivable Impatience

Patsy sleeps later than I do, so every morning I let Annie into our bedroom and help her onto the bed. First, though, I have to let Annie out of her crate. After the cutest stretch (hard for a guy to admit) and a greeting from me she runs to the closed bedroom door, stands up on her back legs, and (it appears to me) tries to open the door. Of course, she's too short to reach the handle, and wouldn't be able to turn it anyway, but every day she tries. She loves to be with Patsy—just to be in her presence.

That reminds me that just to be with Jesus is its own reward. He loves it when I am as eager as Annie to be with him. It honors him.

One recent day I had already cooked my eggs and toast when I let Annie out of her crate. As usual, she made a beeline for the bedroom door and started scratching to get in. I said, "Not yet, Annie."

She came around the corner, cocked her head, and looked at me as if to say, "Why not, dad? This is what we do every day."

I said, "Let me finish my breakfast first. I'm almost done."

She didn't understand. Her world is so much smaller than mine. She can't grasp the range of my thoughts, interests, and responsibilities. So, a minute later, Annie was back at the door scratching to get in. Again, I said, "Annie, not now. I want to finish my breakfast first."

She stopped, but shortly, there she was again—pawing at the door, trying to get in. On the third try I realized her little brain couldn't grasp that I would let her in soon enough—that she just needed to be patient. Instead, she kept begging me to let her in. She just didn't know any better. So what did I do? I got up and opened the door.

No doubt, this is a picture of how God sees me. I am impatient. I don't understand all the complexities of my Master's life. But He doesn't hate me for it. He understands that this is how I am made—in fact, how He himself made me!



And so He opens the door to let me in.

Annie seems naïve and simple to me. I realize that I must be even more so to my Master. Yet I don't love Annie in spite of her qualities, but because of them. No doubt this is also how my Creator loves me.

I'm quite sure that when I keep pestering God with the same request over and over again that He must feel toward me like I feel toward Annie. As I am filled with thoughts of love and joy toward Annie, so God is filled with thoughts of love and joy toward me. In the same way Annie didn't know any better than to keep begging (even though I would have come soon enough), so I don't know any better than to keep begging God (even though he will come soon enough).

Because I see how much Annie doesn't understand, I find her impatience forgivable. How could I hold it against her? In the same way, when God sees how much we don't understand He, too, finds our impatience forgivable.

Gracious Overlooking

Every day when I open the bedroom door, Annie skitters across the wood floor and jumps up on a chair next to the bed. She can't really make the jump, but every day she seems to think she can.

It takes me a few seconds to reach her because I first rearrange the pillows on my side of the bed. One recent day, as every day, Annie was acting like it was the first time this scenario had ever played out. She impatiently considered trying to make the leap from the chair to the bed. But this day impatience won, she took the plunge, bounced off the side of the bed, and landed with a loud thud.

I went over and picked her up—as I would have done anyway had she waited a few seconds like I've done 1,000 times before—then put her on the bed.

God has been so good to me and, I would imagine, to you too. Yet even though He has met the same needs and desires 10,000 times before, I still get impatient and don't want to wait for Him to come. Yet, even when I leap and fall, He nevertheless always picks me up.

Happy To See Me

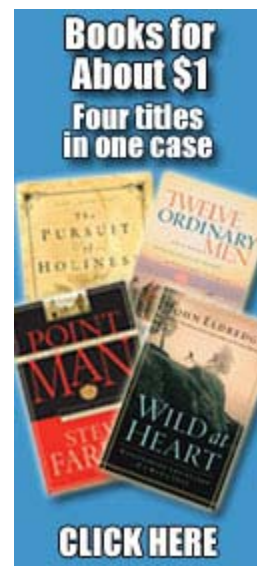
When Patsy and I leave the house, Annie takes up a standard position on a chair that overlooks the driveway. Of course, she has no idea of the world in which we live and move—the vastness of our interests, the distances we travel, the network of our relationships. All Annie knows is that she misses us when we are gone and so she waits for our return.

Even if we are only out for an hour, the response when we return is always the same. Annie acts like we've been away for six months and this is the great reunion. She wags her tail—in fact, she wags her entire body. And then she starts “the buzz”—the somewhat famous “Bijon buzz.” She darts away at bionic speed, races across the house, stops abruptly, does an about face, runs to us, and skids to a stop. She repeats this overly exuberant joy over our return several times. It seems a little over the top, but we sure do feel loved. She is so happy to see us—to see me.

This reminds me that God loves to be loved by me. If my joy over Him is exuberant—even overly so—He enjoys it.

I Love Even the Little Dogs

I know I'm a guy and that, as a guy, I'm supposed to like big dogs. And I do. But



this little fur ball has captured my heart. I love Annie and, as such, she is under my protection. When she is impatient, I will accommodate. When she errs I will forgive. I will make sure she is taken care of, and protect her from harm. When she becomes ill I will make sure she receives proper care.

We bought Annie. She belongs to us. In the same way, Jesus bought us. We belong to him. If you or I can love, protect, accommodate, forgive, and care for a much loved pet, how much more can our dear Lord love, protect, accommodate, forgive, and care for us? He loves even the little dogs.

For the glory of Christ and no other reason,

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