

Patrick

When

we first started the station, and still today, we are challenged and purposed to encourage people to a personal, daily relationship with God. In all its detail, each of us may perceive that Love in thousands of ways. However, in spite of all those differences, we still all belong to one body--one faith, and celebrate our faith together each day on the radio over FM 104.5.

In

January, we broadcast a series of teachings on the Forgiveness of God from Bill and Anabel Gillham and their Life Time Guarantee Ministry. They were a part of the programming here beginning in 1990 until they quit producing their radio program in 1999. While putting their classic programs together for broadcast, I remembered a story that Anabel shared with us many years ago. I called Bill and Anabel to try and get a copy of her story sent to us. They were both eager to do that and the following is that story. It's about one of Anabel's childhood experiences, and more importantly, it's about the way we should perceive the Love of God in our lives. I sometimes wonder how the Father feels when we're consistently suspicious, constantly asking Him, "Do You love me." That's a question that has already been answered on the Cross. It's something that's a given. It's a question He asks us, not the other way round.

In

the story, Anabel does a perfect "tying it all together" at the end. (As a side note, Bill and Anabel are doing well. Both are still transferring their faith to others with their funny sense of humor and a bright smile that comes across even on the phone. They are the kind of people that once you have met them you put them in a very special place in your life. They understand the Love of God in a very personal and special way that always comes through in the stories and material they share with the body of Christ. If you wish to contact or learn more about their ministry you can visit their website: lifetime.org.) Here's Anabel's story about Patrick. It's for all of us who sometimes forget about the amazing Love of God.

Dad loved to fly fish, and it wasn't necessary for him to have a friend along. He thrived on the solitude, the quietness, the beauty, the "swish" of the line from his reel, seeing how close he could put his fly to "that dark shadow under the tree across the river--they'll be hiding in the shade by that stump." They? The Bluegill. Goggle-eye perch. Smaller fish, but real fighters. You knew when one was on your line!

He had gone to Blackfork and was heading home ... alone. The roads were made for 4-wheel drive vehicles and would have been an exciting challenge, but 4-wheelers weren't around when Dad was here; so he drove the old black Pontiac slowly, carefully, lingering, still enjoying his own private forest.

It was then that he spotted the deserted campsite. There was a cleared place where the tent had been staked, a deep hole that had been used for ice, and a burned out campfire. And there was something else—a little black and brown dog sitting forlornly and expectantly by the pile of rocks that had bordered the fire.

Dad got out and made friends with the dog, sizing up the situation pretty quickly. The dog had no doubt been exploring and wasn't around when time came to break camp and head home. (I can imagine how they had waited and hoped and whistled and called and finally left ... without him.) It seemed like the dog knew that Dad was his last chance, so he hopped into the car and they headed for Poteau together.

We were "dogless" at the time (a rarity), so seeing the lost dog in Daddy's arms was a real thrill for us. He was a small terrier with wiry black hair and tan feet. His tail hadn't been bobbed and the tip was tan like his feet. With his ears up, he was not over a foot tall. He let us hold him and love on him, sensing perhaps that this was going to be his new home. We tried every name that we could think of, but we just couldn't excite him. He answered best to a two-syllable name, so we finally called him Sonny.

Dad put an ad in the LeFlore County Sun: "Dog found at campsite on south end of Blackfork River. Call 410 to identify." When a call would come, he'd always ask them to describe their dog, and Sonny never fit the bill. We were so glad, because he had won our hearts. His master had obviously spent time playing with him and training him ... one of his favorite pastimes was knocking a pop bottle around with his nose and playing with it like a ball. Sonny had accepted us and we had accepted Sonny. He was part of the Hoyle family.

Then one day Dad called, "Honey, we've got a young man here who thinks the little dog is his. I'm sending him out to let him see Sonny."

I was at home by myself and didn't know just quite how I could face someone coming and claiming Sonny, taking him away. I put him on the back porch and closed the kitchen door.

Our front door opened into a hallway. The first door on the right was to our guest bedroom, the immediate left to the living room. The living room and dining room were one large, long room, with a door at the end of the dining area that opened into the kitchen; the door to the back porch was in line with that door. The divan had been placed as a "divider" between the two areas. Sonny could go around the divan, or crawl under it, but it was too high for him to go over.

A knock on the front door. I didn't want to go. I dreaded it, but knew I had to. The young man at the door stood on crutches—you could tell they had been his life-long companions. He introduced himself and I ushered him into the living room, right at the front end by the piano. We talked a moment, then I suggested that he call the dog when I opened the door to the back porch so we could see what kind of response he would get. He agreed. When I opened the door, Sonny was playing with a pop bottle.

Suddenly there was a short, clear whistle
and a call, "Patrick!"

Sonny froze and tilted his head to one
side, the abandoned pop bottle rolling toward the wall. Then again, the whistle
and that name, "Patrick!"

Patrick scratched at the linoleum floor
with his little short legs, trying to get traction, and then he started
running—through the dining table legs, over
the top of the divan and, with one wild leap, into the outstretched arms of
his master, who was ready ... balanced ... watching anxiously with tears on his
cheeks. He grabbed that little dog and held him so close and tight! Patrick knew his master's voice.

* * * * *

I hope I did justice to that story. It's
one of my favorites. Why did I tell it? Because I want to talk about "who
we are" and "who God is." We are Patrick, and we have a Master who
loves us more than we can possibly comprehend. Oh, Patrick was surviving with
us, but his heart was still with the person who loved him, played with him,
trained him, and drove 160 miles over a crooked, narrow road to claim him and
identify him as his own.

Do you know
who you are? Do you know that those arms are outstretched, that He is standing
and waiting, with a tear-streaked face, for you to run and with "one, wild
leap" jump into His arms? Do you know that you are totally and completely
loved? Oh, you may be "surviving" in your present surroundings,
entertaining yourself with your "toys," but are you separated from
the One who loves you so much that He gave His life for you?

Whatever you have in your hands, let it
go. Then, kind of tilt your head and listen. Did you hear that whistle? Sharp.
Clear. And you recognize the voice, don't you? Okay. Start scrambling. Run.
Faster. Go under and over the obstacles, no matter how tall they seem to be.
Then, jump! He's watching ... he's able
to catch you ... and His arms will gather you close and hold you, and you'll be
back where you belong.