

My Dog Wants To Talk To Me

(This newsletter was originally written in April 2005. I'm just fresh out of doing the Mark Schultz/POG concert and after that event again had thoughts about how we so much want to communicate with and praise God, even though we have very limited ability to share that for the most part and are limited in our attempt to do so many of the times. So, I thought I'd revisit this note, reading it encouraged me once again, hope it encourages you as well... By the way, Ivy is still doing just fine!)

My Dog Wants To Talk to Me!

That's true. I've seen it! But, that's not the place to begin. Ivy is her name. She is our second Beagle. If you remember I did a newsletter a few years ago about our first Beagle, Jessie. I identified in that earlier letter how much Jessie meant to me. She was the first dog that had lived in our house and the first dog that, in some strange way, became a very real part of our family. She didn't really do that much to be so "connected to us" but she "connected" just the same. As I recall, the whole purpose of that letter was to identify how much we all loved Jessie just because she was our dog. She certainly was not the only dog deserving of such love, but no other dog got the attention and the affection as much as Jessie did in our lives. I compared our love for Jessie dog to the Love of God for "His" own, His family. A family made up of believers. That Love for us is justified only because we are His. It's not because we deserve it, or earn it; it's just because we're His! His Grace grants it to us. (Galatians Chapter 3)

I really loved writing that letter. As I wrote it I discovered how deep, how wide and how high the love of Christ is for all "His children" that have accepted being chosen by Him. Just as we chose Jessie at the kennel, so the Creator of the Universe chose you and picked you out to be a part of His family. All the things Jessie needed (shelter, food and love) we provided. Jessie loved us as much as we loved her. Now as dogs go, she was a great dog and a dog that taught me a great lesson about God's Love for His children.

But, Ivy, the subject of this letter, is the one that wants to talk to me. It was this past evening. I was fooling 'round with Ivy. I began to talk to her in the usual manner. You know the kind of talking that people do to dogs, cats and babies. You could just see it in her eyes. Pretty soon her head cocked a little off center and she began to move her mouth in such a way that I could just tell she wanted to talk to me, wanted to tell me how much she loved this game. I think she wanted to tell me how much she loved having this relationship with someone. Of course all she could do was take off running and jumping and twisting and wagging her tail (what in Beagle language is called a flag) at me. But I could see that desire to talk to me just the same. Towering over her, a picture went off in my head about the Father and our attempt to

"talk to Him" and strong desire to listen. I was almost brought to tears thinking about how sad it would actually be if Ivy wanted so much to talk to me and not have a language to communicate with me. I was aware of the sadness I felt by not being able to let her know how much I appreciated and loved her desire to "talk to me." Just seeing her attempt to do the best she could pleased me as much as if we could actually talk to one another.

There's a very rare simplicity in "dog and master love." I really don't do very much to cause Ivy to respond to me, to love me so. Oh, I feed her, give her water and take her outside. But, that's about it. Actually, she could live without me, I suppose. It would be harder living without my love but she could do it. (We, too, can live without His love, but it's not easy, not comfortable, not pleasant, and simply not the way it was meant to be.) For all the things I "don't do" for Ivy, she still gets so excited when I get home each night. She's devoted. Just like clockwork, Ivy meets me at the door each night and "just loves me to death." It pleases me so to have that happen. It's rare in this world that anyone is "unjustifiably happy" just to see someone else. It surely is the same way with the Father. I'm sure when we meet with Him he is overjoyed to have us so "giddy" to be with Him. What great pleasure He must get out of those moments.

Ivy's "tickled" with any attention I give her; she goes "nuts" about it. She jumps high in the air, spins, twists and barks with an unusual vigor. Man-worship if you will! When you take the time to watch and notice her response, it almost brings tears to your eyes to be the benefactor of so much approval and love. How the Father must feel when we celebrate before Him.

My dog wants to talk to me! She really does. She wants to communicate so badly and be much more a part of the relationship. But you know the important thing? Ivy does all she can do to express her love for me. It's an expression with limits. I'm sure in the scheme of all Creation, our expression to the Father is limited as well. However, just as I appreciate and recognize Ivy's "limited" expression of love, the Father recognizes our expressions as well. My heart breaks observing her desire mixed with her minimum ability to interact with me. She can't "say what she wants to say" but I love "the desire to talk to me" just the same.

Dog ownership is "strange" in so many ways. It seems like an ancient idea, perhaps from the loneliness of some earlier time. I know that people that have never owned a dog that's been a part of the family (in the house, eats with you, sleeps at your feet, runs to the door to meet you, does all kinds of tricks for just a pat on the head: that kind of being a part of the family) can't really understand. They can't "feel or appreciate" that relationship because they have never experienced that kind of relationship "with an animal." When you tell people about it, they just kind of shrug their shoulders and think maybe that's over the top just a little bit. But, there's something we can learn from that experience. Not surprisingly, people feel the same way when they are unaware of a relationship with God. I mean they just can't get it. It's just not imaginable for them until it's real to them. I didn't get it about Jessie and Ivy until I got it! I didn't get it about the Father until I got it! When we first picked up Jessie, you could never have made me believe I could care so much for a dog; that I could have experienced so much from a dog. After she died, I couldn't wait to experience that "unconditional love" again. Jessie left an impression on my heart. Ivy continues that today. Our experience with the Father is much the same. Once experienced, you never want to give His unconditional Love up.

What was not imaginable before that experience is now commonplace, normal and consistent. I'm glad we got a Beagle. Jessie taught me so much about the Love of God toward us. Ivy has taught me about our love toward God. I'm more aware of my limited and simple communication with God and yet, how pleased He is to see that expression just the same. I understand that just because "my dog wants to talk to me!"