

## Lessons from a Dog Named Sarah



One of the things I'm thankful for is our dog Sarah. She passed away this year, but at Thanksgiving I'll still be thinking of her and still be very thankful that we had her.

One day several years ago, our Sarah came and stood in front of me and stared at me with unusual intensity. After a minute, I realized she was probably trying to communicate something to me. I thought about what it might be and hazarded a guess, saying, "Do you need to go outside?" She gave a one-bark YES! and ran to the door. I let her out, and, sure enough, she'd needed to do some immediate toileting.

I found myself honored and humbled by the compliment she'd given me. She came to me with faith that (1) I'd be able to figure out her message and with faith that (2) I would want to help her.

It occurred to me that this must be a little like how God feels about us and prayer. I think people may often get the feeling that God doesn't want to be bothered by us unless we have something profound and perfectly articulate to say. But that is not true. He **WANTS** to hear from us. He is *glad* that we have faith that He will hear and understand us, even when our best efforts are clumsy or inarticulate; and He is *glad* that we have hope in His character, hope that He will care about our needs and trials, both small and great.

Dogs teach other spiritual lessons as well. Dogs tend to pour out unconditional love upon us and thus give us one of earth's most readily available glimpses of divine love.

Dogs also love purpose—whether it is shepherd dogs working with sheep or cattle or whether it is an ordinary dog who wants to join us on the important mission of walking down to the mailbox or the drive to the hardware store. People too need purpose, mission, meaning.

Dogs also give us one of earth's most readily available pictures of joy--whether it's the jumping up and down in excitement when its human comes home type or whether it's the deep quiet joy of a dog lying at its human's feet.

And dogs—like young children and old folks--tend not to hide their feelings. They don't have much of a poker face. They make us laugh and remind us of the difference between their lack of subterfuge and the great subterfuge we often try to weave around our own selves... even though God will see right through it. :)

So...dogs teach us about God and about ourselves.

If you remember just one thing after reading this, think upon Sarah having faith that I would make an effort to hear and understand her and that I would want to help her with her needs...and that God feels that way about us.