

Last year, right before Christmas I had to have my old, faithful dog put down. It was very hard, painful, and made me feel incredibly lonely. Any one who has ever lost a pet understands about them being your children. I got her 12 years ago when I was going through my divorce and she brought lots of fun and companionship to our lives. I have no idea how old she really was because she had been a stray. I just know that I miss her terribly.

I hated the loneliness so I decided to start looking for a new companion. My youngest son went with me to the animal shelter in Lebanon where we visited with a few dogs, but didn't feel a connection to any of them. It made me miss poor old Emmie all the more.

One month to the day of her death we went to the Clermont shelter. As we walked past the cages we discussed whether any of them might be possibilities. None of the dogs really struck us. They couldn't be too young or too large because of living in an apartment and the long days it would spend alone. As we rounded the last bend there she was. She had that same look in her eyes that Emmie had all those years ago. Andrew and I just looked at each other and we both puddle up. Here was the dog we had been looking for!

We went to the desk to ask to visit with her. When they brought her

into the room, she ran across it and threw herself into my lap, then went to Andrew. This was what I had been waiting for. She even had a small resemblance to Emmie. I was not going to leave without her. They had taken her in one month earlier so Andrew decided that she had been there waiting for us since Emmie died.

I got to take her home with me. We stopped at the vet, I had to show her off, I said see my new baby! He said she looks an awful lot like the old baby. He gave her some worm medications and said bring her back. Being the lovey animal she is she climbed on his lap. You have to understand she climbs on everyone's lap--Zoe is a German Shepherd, but she is about the size of a border collie, and she weighs 35 lbs. She is one of the largest lap dogs you have ever seen. We stopped at the apartment office to show them this beast. Of course Zoe climbed on the laps of the girls in the office.

I had no clue what we were in for. For 3 weeks she was the most serious dog you have ever seen. She didn't play or chew or make a sound. What she did do was cling to me like a barnacle. The kids called her magnet dog. She would lean on me and wind her legs around me so that I couldn't even pry her off. She still does this. I had a friend stop by to check her out and as I tried to pry her off me so that he could see her she would just cling tighter. He looked at her and said "Neat, do

you do that with magnets?” She is very large for a lap dog, but you will never convince her of this. She wants to be so close she is almost behind me. She rubs her face on yours and if you ignore her she will hit you in the head with these huge paws. I tell everyone that she’s Collie, Rotweiler, and barnacle.

Unfortunately after a few days she started to destroy things while we were at work, so we used her leash to keep her in the kitchen. This worked for a few days and we were happy. Andrew came home from work one day and Zoe met him at the door, she had chewed through the leash and destroyed a few things. We were forced to get our old cage back and put her in it. She hates the cage and has several tricks to make it hard for us to put her in. She will make herself long and stiff so that it’s almost impossible to pick her up or she will get behind and under furniture. When you do get her to the cage it is like watching COPS where they are trying to shove the suspect into the cruiser, only not as easy.

She is for the most part silent. She runs through the house and jumps over the back of the couch onto your lap and you never know she’s coming. I had to put jingles on her before someone had a stroke. I told a friend that Zoe was like a German U Boat “Run Silent Run Deep”. She only makes sounds at two times, in her sleep she sighs and moans.

The first time she did this I thought someone was in the room at 2 AM. The other sound she makes is an irritating nose whistle. It is unreal and incredibly shrill. She does this when she hears us come home and wants out of the cage. The first time she did it Andrew was home and he said “How much is THAT going to cost us to fix?” I wanted a watch dog, but she still rarely barks and when she does it sounds like “bark”. Not very guard dog like.

Lately she has learned how to play and fetch; her goofy side has emerged and she is very funny. Zoe is very lanky and sits more like a monkey than a dog. She has some very bad habits. She likes to nibble on you or your earrings or buttons. She jumps, and hits you in the face with the paws. She also is very aggressive and unpredictable around other dogs. Last week at obedience class she attacked another dog out of the blue. So I have to watch her like a hawk. I’m hoping we don’t get barred for life from Pet Smart. But we love her for all her quirks and will continue to work with her. Her predecessor was so bad that I called her the hound from hell or Lassie as in “Lassie wouldn’t do that”, and Emmie turned out to be the most incredible companion.

All this back ground is prelude to my thought for today. Does God ever look at us in the same way I look at my new puppy? You don’t have to agree with me, just follow my thinking a bit. Much like my dog we are

unpredictable. It's that whole free will thing. Just because she's sitting on my lap behaving does not mean she isn't looking over my shoulder and trying to steal food from the dog behind us.

We are sitting in God's lap. God gives us this whole beautiful world, and we are too lazy and thoughtless to clean up after ourselves. We mess and destroy without worrying about the consequences. We will bite what ever is in our way. We are unpredictable in our behavior. How often have we thought someone should be grateful for what they have but instead they complain about what else they want?

All that matters is our own pleasures of the moment. Does it make me happy? Then I'll do it. Will it hurt others in some way? Who cares. When Zoe wants attention she just smacks you with the paw. Doesn't matter if she scores your face--it's what she wants. She is as thoughtless as a toddler. So are we. Like a dog or a toddler, even though our needs are met we can become bored and want more. We are never satisfied. We just want one or two more things.

Zoe wants love and attention and she wants it now, so she jumps in your lap, smacks you with the paw or chews your shoes. When we are lonely and want love and attention or food or good health we petition God and cry and beg and make promises. We ask that GOD pay attention

to us NOW. We are not satisfied with making our request and waiting for the answer. We don't want our wishes granted later when the time is right, we want an answer or a miracle NOW.

When Zoe is eating or happily chewing a toy, I don't count. Oh yeah, an occasional glance to make sure I'm still there, but for the most part she's ignoring me, much as we do with God. Hey, when life is good do we remember to talk to and thank God? Or does God sit up in heaven look at us and say "Yeah, these humans I created are cute and all, but they never call, they never write until they want something. They ignore me when life is good. When it's not and they want something, they do everything in their power to get my attention."

How much does God have to do to get our attention? How often do we ignore the still small voice or the nudges because maybe what God wants us to do is not exactly what we want to do? We get that selective deafness that a dog or toddler gets when we want them to stop doing something destructive or dangerous.

Do we remember to give God attention or thank God for what we have? On Thanksgiving I was traveling and probably had the worst meal I have ever had in my life. My \$25 dinner was inedible--whoever heard of yucca and beets for veggies? But right before dinner I gave a

starving drug addict all the snacks in my purse which he shoved in his face. It gave me a very good perspective on my meal. For one thing I was very thankful that I HAD \$25 to throw away on a meal. Where was his family and support group? Was he afraid or ashamed to call them? Don't we sometimes do that with God? We don't talk to God because we know we've been bad and wronged someone else? Doesn't the dog hide when she's chewed a shoe? When this happens we cry and moan about our fate and say that God has turned away from us and is not giving us any attention. Of course God never took attention away from us; we just quit looking at God.

Are we as undisciplined to God as my puppy is to me? Does God hope that we learn our lessons the way I hope my dog does? Does God hope we become good citizens of the world as I hope my dog becomes a good companion?

There is an old saying, "try to be more like a dog". Greet every person as if they were a long lost friend. Be more trusting, be loyal, enjoy the simple things. Take a walk, smell the flowers. My goofy dog is ecstatic when you rub her toes and the pads of her feet; we should all be so happy with simple signs of affection.

Are we as happy when God gives us a glorious spring day and the health

and energy to enjoy it? Are we glad just to be able to spend a few hours with friends, family or our four-legged friends? Do we savor the warmth of a hug? I know I should be more puppy like, worry less, enjoy more and try to learn my lessons. Sometimes I think people or puppies--not much difference.