

## Even A Dog Gets It!

Even as a confused ten-year-old, she sensed we were her last hope. Thrown out of two previous homes because she was too mean, we experienced only her gentle, trusting side.

The agreement was to house her for a few weeks; a quickie adoption until a family to love her was found. Before that happened Richard, my husband, fell in love with this Labrador/German Shepherd mix and that 'other home' became ours. For six years, she's shared our home, our lives as companion and confidant.

Making the recent news she's dying so disheartening...

As I begin my sad, final goodbyes, Rascal's legacy isn't merely her love, but demonstrating that my life with God should be more like a dog's life. Her uncomplicated lessons point the way to Him.

**Know Your Savior** - Rascal was supposed to be my husband's dog. But, from the beginning, Rascal decided I was her master and always treated me as the alpha dog. Her loyalty was confusing. I've never had an animal attach herself to me when I wasn't enamored of her. Maybe she sensed I had orchestrated her rescue. It is so difficult *not* to love a dog showering you with affection. Rascal won me over and soon the love was mutual.

Like Rascal, I am desperately in need of rescue. Fortunately, there is a God who is showering me with affection. Isn't it just as difficult not to love Him after He reached out to rescue me through Christ's death on the cross? All I need do is accept His loving salvation.

**Adore Your Master** – Before age slowed her down, whenever Rascal heard the garage door rise, she ran to the family room entrance. Incredibly excited to greet us, she literally clawed the door and the wall beside it in an effort to get to us sooner.

Sadly, sin, speed of life and lack of motivation are barriers that prevent me from entering into the presence of God. Do I ever claw them down to gleefully meet my creator? He's there. He's opened up the garage door, why am I not panting at the door to greet Him?

**Love Deeply** –Rascal's profound love for me was acutely evident to all who saw us together. Her eyes sparkle with happiness. Even though arthritis makes it difficult for her to get around, she still follows me from room to room. She's never judgmental and loves me regardless of how I look or what I say.

In Mark 12: 30 – 31, Jesus pointed out the two greatest commandments: love God, love others: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."(NIV)

How I wish I could have the ability to love others with the intense love my dog has given me. I strive to follow her example: loving people without judgment, without prejudice, simply because God loves them.

**Savor the Mundane** – Twice a day for six years, Rascal has chowed down the same meal. Most humans would tire of this routine, but she perks up the moment you come anywhere near her bowl. Once that bowl is filled with dinner and hits the ground, Rascal tears into it with wild abandon.

How many of God's blessings do I miss by not completely embracing the mundane things in my life? Simple things like a cooling glass of lemonade or the exquisite stillness of a snow fall. God is even at work in the less thrilling things in my life.

Yet, sadly, the ordinary is often missed in the haste of my life. I didn't fully realize this until one day, while journaling, I thanked God for the stunning blue of my eyes. I've had these eyes for too many years to admit. Why did it take me that long to thank Him? God's unending expressions of love invite us to a life to be celebrated without restraint.

**Expect Treats** - Rascal anticipates treats, especially the one lying on top of her bed at night - the mint on her pillow, so to speak. She expects those daily treats so much so that if you forget one, she quickly communicates your error.

Do I expect treats? Hardly! I'm the daughter of a caring, loving God. Too often I allow myself to get bogged down by problems instead of eagerly anticipating God's treats - the unexpected parking spot at the mall, the laughter of a friend who called just to say hello, the eye-catching red of a fallen leaf? They surround me every day and they are definitely better than a dog biscuit.

**Make Each Day an Adventure** - Every day is a Rascal Dog Adventure Day. Barking at strangers and protecting me are joyous tasks. Greeting the neighborhood children with a wag of her tail satisfies her purpose of making others happy. Going to the park was such a grand adventure, that you'd have to firmly hold her leash or she'd bolt across the street.

Daily adventures are waiting for me. But instead of dancing in the morning sun's bright glow, I'm thinking of all the items on my to do list. Instead of celebrating the joy of serving God, my mind is moving at light speed. Instead of relishing the time spent with a friend, I'm loading up my schedule. My decisions conspire against me treasuring my life's grand adventure - knowing and being known by God.

Sometimes I picture God watching us from heaven thinking, "It's so simple, even a dog gets it." Since I've owned her, Rascal has lived a full-out, excellent dog's life. Her lessons are simple, but provide the design for an exceptional life - understanding, experiencing and loving our heavenly Master.