



DEVOTIONS FOR DOG LOVERS

Selected Readings



BY GAYLE M. IRWIN
Waggin' Tales

**Selected Readings
from**

Devotions for Dog Lovers: Paws-ing for Time with God
and
*Devotions for Dog Lovers 2: Sage Advice – Lessons from a Blind Dog
and Other Canines I've Known*

by Gayle M. Irwin

From Paws-ing for Time with God

Messes

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. Isaiah 1:18

Whenever you have a dog, and certainly multiple dogs, there is a lot of mess to clean up, especially in the yard. Greg and I take turns scooping the poop. It's not a pleasant experience, but it's one pet parents need to engage in, just as human parents have to clean the poo made by young children.

And, it's not just poop. When our dogs are sick, they make messes on our carpet. Stains set in on our floors and on our dogs if we don't get the mess washed quickly. Again, like children, our dogs need someone to clean up after them – and it's not a heavenly job.

Yet, God takes it upon Himself to clean up our messes. The Heavenly Father, through the blood of His Son, Jesus, ensures His sin-stained people are whiter than snow. Even David, the man after God's own heart, recognized his uncleanliness. “Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow,” he writes in Psalm 51:7. David stumbled several times in his walk with God, yet he desired to be a God-follower. “Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me,” he continues in verses 9 and 10. Is that our prayer? Do we recognize our sinfulness and our need for cleansing by our Holy God?

Puppies need to be potty-trained; that takes time and patience. God's people also need training for, like David, we falter in our faith walk. Our patient God desires to clean us up, whether for the first time or the fortieth time. Just like our dogs have “accidents” and soil the carpet, our “accidents” soil us – we need the purifying grace and love of God through Christ to get us clean again.

It isn't just poo and sickness that makes dogs, and us, stinky. Dirt, grime, mud, and trash make for dirty dogs. Our canine friends need bathing – they get into stuff that stinks and their coats smell. We also get into “stinky stuff”, things not good for us. God willingly bathes us when we start to smell, as long as we are willing to let Him do so. “If we confess our sins, he faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” writes the Apostle John in 1 John 1:9.

Do your messes need cleaning up? Do you need a bath? Let the love and mercy of God wash over you like rain, purifying you through the blood of Christ.

“Heavenly Father, thank you for your cleansing grace. I bring to you all the messes I've made and ask you to wash me clean. Bathe me in your vast, unfailing mercy and love. I pray this in Jesus' name – Amen.”

Adoption is a Beautiful Thing

...he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will... Ephesians 1:5

The tan cocker spaniel sat on the concrete floor of the Humane Society kennel. His brown eyes gazed at me as I walked past. Unkempt but not bedraggled, the little fellow appeared lost, forlorn. The creature behind bars seemed to appeal to me to bail him out of jail. I had wanted a cocker spaniel for awhile but had not been in a position to have one due to renting, college, travel. Owning my own home and having a fulltime job, I decided this was the time. The dog had been brought in stray and no one had come to claim him, so he was now available for adoption. "Sam", as I named him, lived with me until his death more than ten years later.

Nationally, nearly seven million animals pass through the doors of animal shelters across the country, half of which are dogs. Of those 3.5 million, sadly nearly half are euthanized, killed because no one adopts them. It's difficult to walk through the kennels of shelters or to watch ads on TV for such organizations – to see sad, scared, lonely faces of these homeless, often unwanted animals.

There is no more lonely feeling than that of being unwanted or unloved. Many of us experience these feelings, or have in the past. Yet, God longs to adopt us into His family. He showers us with blessings from the beauty of His creation to the material possessions He provides. The greatest love-gift He's given is His own Son, Jesus Christ, sacrificed so that we may have eternal life, a beautiful, blessed life without sorrow or fear. Because of Christ, we can be adopted as sons and daughters of our Creator God.

The Apostle John says we are "children of God" (1 John 3:1) because of the the Father's lavish love. When we accept Christ as our Savior, ask God to forgive our sins, and cling to the Lord in faith, we become children of the Most High God, given the gift and promise of eternal life.

Sam was loved and cared for throughout the remainder of his life. I have since adopted other dogs and was blessed by each in my life. I wish I could give homes to all homeless, unwanted dogs, to stop the loneliness and the killing. Alas, that sorrow will not be alleviated until Christ returns and wipes away all tears. In the meantime, I bask in my adoption as a child of God and in the pleasure and honor of adopting a pet who needs love, kindness and assurance, just as God gives to me.

"Oh, Lord, thank you for the gift of adoption! May I remember to relish the relationship we share and to be thankful for the gift of eternal life you've given me. I am honored to be your child! In Jesus' Name - Amen."

From Dog Lovers 2:

Favorite Places

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35 - NIV

Cody has his favorite places, especially for sleeping. Dog beds with comfortable blankets line our livingroom, my office, and the bedroom. Cody chooses which one he wants to curl up on, but he has a favorite: a round bed with plush lining. I make it even cozier by adding a fleece blanket or clean sheet and he snuggles into the softness and sleeps for hours. Mary wasn't one for dog beds until recently after I purchased a new one lined with cedar chips and laid another fleece blanket on top of it. This dog bed is in my home office near my desk; Mary and Cody take turns sharing the space. By far Mary's favorite resting areas are on the couch, in our bed for a full night's sleep, or stretched out next to my husband as he spends time in his recliner. Mary much prefers people places over dog furniture!

I, too, have favorite places – for resting and for visiting. I enjoy curling up with a good book or watching TV from our sofa recliner, especially when a dog or cat snuggles near me. My home office space is lined with windows from where I can watch the sun rise or birds flit in the shrubbery. Each spring and summer I look forward to visits to our cabin or to traveling somewhere else outside of town. I enjoy deserts in the winter and mountains in the summer, experiencing the beauty of various landscapes during different seasons of the year. I am not a big-city person, although experiencing museums and other urban amenities have intrigued me at times. My favorite places are outdoors, in the quiet, basking in natural beauty.

Jesus, too, had his favorite places, especially when he prayed. The English Standard Version of Luke 5:16 says, “But he (Jesus) would withdraw to desolate places and pray.” Other versions call them “solitary places” while still others call them “quiet places.” He also spent a lot of time near the Sea of Galilee, in Bethany, and on the Mount of Olives. One could interpret that Jesus particularly enjoyed two favorite places: quiet, solitary settings and places where his friends, and those to whom he ministered, were found.

Do you have a favorite place that has meaning for you? Is there is a quiet place where you can go and spend time alone with the Lord? If you haven't found that special place, why not make it a priority and spend quality time with God there? If you do have that quiet place, that special place, spend as much time as you can there – make it a sacred place to share time with God. Let the Holy Spirit minister to you, refresh and renew you, and I'm sure it will become your favorite place!

“Heavenly Father, thank you for directing me to the special place where we can spend time together. Whether that's a room in my home while all still sleep, the garden you've helped me create, or a wilderness you've enriched with plant and animal life – I thank you for the quiet place that's our special place made sacred because of your presence. I look forward to spending time with you, learning more about you and having you fill and enrich my life with your Holy Spirit. I bless and praise your name. In Jesus' Name – Amen.”

A New Name

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it. Rev. 2:17

The cocker spaniel I adopted in 1989 was just a number in that animal shelter in Montana. His story, his history, and his name were not known by the shelter workers. Only he and God knew from where he came, and no one bothered to come and claim him. I christened him “Sam” after I adopted him, and he was my friend and companion for more than 10 years.

Some dogs that are brought into shelters and rescues receive new names. Maybe they came in stray, with an unknown background and an unknown name, just like Sam. Perhaps the rescue christens the canine with a new name because the dog had such a difficult life previously, and a new name equals a new life.

Those of us who follow Christ will also be given new names. Jesus says in today’s scripture that our new name will only be known “to the one who receives it.” It’s a special name, one the Savior himself bestows. Just as the dog we bring into our home is special, we are special to God, so special in fact that he knows the number of hairs on our head (see Luke 12:7).

God knows everything about us, the good, the bad, the ugly, the awesome. He knows when we fail and he’s there to pick us up when we stumble. “...for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again,” records Proverbs 24:16. God doesn’t love us less in our struggles; in fact, He wants us to lean on Him and allow Him to pick us back up. Psalm 50:15 says, “...call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.” Because we honor God by trusting Him and accepting His gift of grace, we become His child. He not only knows our name, but He also gives us a new name because He has adopted us.

Some people choose a new name for themselves – perhaps they want a more (or less) ethnic name; maybe they want to make a statement, or possibly they don’t like their original name. There are many things we may not like about ourselves or that we wish were different. Yet, when we accept Christ, we become different. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

And, one day, that new creation – you and me – will have a brand new name, a unique and special name, thanks to the work, love, mercy, and grace of God!

“Dear Lord, thank you for the new creation you’ve made me. Because of your sacrifice, I am not the person I used to be. Although I stumble, I know you’re there to help me stand again, and I look forward to the new name you will give me when I see you face-to-face. In Jesus’ Name – Amen.”

