

Notes about living as a Christian

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## continuous conversion

### WHAT I LEARNED FROM OUR DOG

BY SARA TUSEK

If the only friend I'd ever had was our dog, his character would teach me all I really need to know about being a good friend and, more importantly, a good wife.

This pretty dog's big brown eyes express three things I learned from our dog:

1. Courage
2. Humility
3. Steadfastness

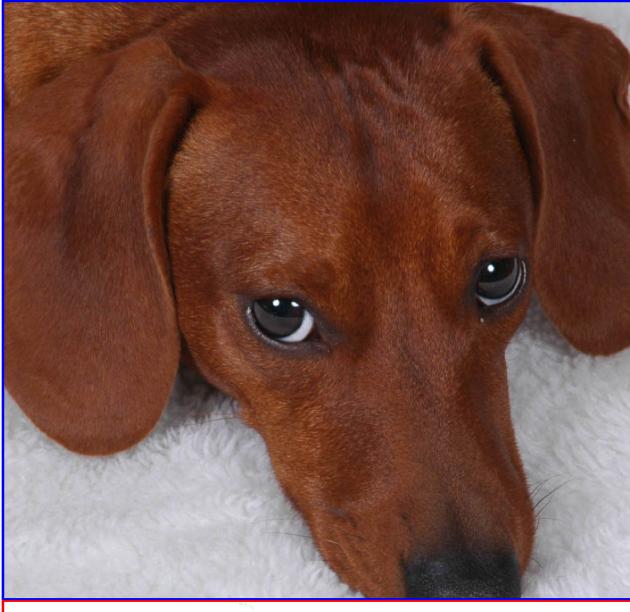
#### COURAGE

Our dog is a Dachshund, a German "badger dog." He was bred to hunt badgers, notoriously mean and dangerous mammals that make tunnels in farmland and eat crops. The dachshund's adorably short legs and long body are perfectly suited to burrowing into the earthen tunnels in which badgers live.

Imagine going headfirst into a dark, constricted space, at the end of which waits a

frightened badger, sharp teeth and all. The badger outweighs the Dachshund and is fighting for his life.

The Dachshund must be courageous to the point of rashness. He cannot hesitate to enter a dangerous situation, and must rely on his ability to surprise the badger and prevent him from escaping. If the Dachshund is not skillful and brave, he will suffer the counterattack of a crazed beast (the badger). This calls for courage.



Courage, humility and steadfastness

#### HUMILITY

A dog leads, well, "a dog's life." He's not his own master; he is in the position of obeying the will of either a human master or another dog (if he's a stray who ends up in a pack). Only a wild, solitary dog can follow his own instincts, and such animals are usually not happy campers. It appears that a dog, unlike a person, enjoys being subordinate to another and does so by choice.



*Willing to obey (even if he feels foolish): he's humble*

his master.

No creature who is not humble can be taught; no learning can take place without a spirit of obedience and joy in service. Humility is not glamorous, nor is it popular. Who would choose to be like a dog, waiting to be told what to do?

I have to deliberately choose to be humble—to obey my husband, my employer, my church elders and God Himself. My dog reminds me of this daily, as he chooses to obey me.

#### **STEADFASTNESS**

There's a word we use to describe someone who is relentless in the pursuit of a goal: "dogged". We say that a follower "dogs" our feet; the detective "dogs" his suspect. Movie dogs follow the master from whom they're tragically separated across the entire country, showing up skinny, filthy, with bloody feet, at their master's

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Such willing obedience to another is one chief aspect of humility. A humble creature, be he human or dog, will set aside his own ideas of self in order to please

doorstep. Greyfriars Bobby was a Scottish Skye terrier who, according to legend, slept on his master's grave for 14 years until he died himself.

Working dogs fill a huge variety of roles: assisting people with mobility, visual and hearing limitations; assisting rescue workers in urban and wilderness emergency situations; guarding property and other animals, such as sheep and cattle; tracking and detecting creatures from lost people to termites to illegal drugs; assisting soldiers in mine detection and wire laying; pulling sleds in the Far North, and just being available to be loved by the sick, the lonely, the very old and the very young.

Dogs are uniquely suited among domesticated animals for these roles due to their courage in dangerous situations, their willingness to be trained (humility) and their instinct to keep at a job until it's completed (steadfastness).

Dogs and humans become close partners with humans, who appreciate the dog's special qualities. It's not a stretch to say that they become friends, with a special element of trust and obedience that's not found in every human friendship. Courage, humility, steadfastness—these are qualities we value in others. And they can be

seen in  
my little  
dog.



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Sara Tusek, Editor,

International Leadership Institute

830-13 A1A North, #317, Ponte Vedra Beach FL 32082

Tel/Fax: 904.992.8729; tusek@fdn.com