

Point of View
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“BURNEY!” I yelled at the top of my lungs. “Get over here!”

From around the corner of the house, Burney came at a sprint, but when she saw me standing next to Mom’s flower bed with my hands on my hips and my feet spread in my most authoritarian stance, she stopped dead in her tracks.

“Burney! Come here!”

She looked up at me warily, her head hung low in dejection. She inched her way toward me ever so slowly. Half way she stopped. She knew what she had done and she knew what was in store.

“Burney! Get over here!”

She slid closer. When she finally reached my feet, she rolled over, revealing her stomach in a sign of submission. It didn’t work. I rolled her over and spanked her.

Then I grabbed her by the collar, pulled her to the offending hole, and stuck her face in it.

“No!” I yelled. “Bad dog!”

I didn’t know if it was sinking in, or if I was destroying her vulnerable doggie ego. After all, I hadn’t read one book on doggie parenting, but somehow getting upset and letting her know about it seemed the right thing to do. It seemed to be working. She hung her head in appropriate contrition and looked up at me with those apologetic brown cocker eyes. I took her head in my hands again and stared straight into those baby browns.

“Bad dog,” I repeated, then stood up and walked away. She followed contritely right at my heels so that I almost tripped trying to go through the patio door. She hugged close to me trying to slip in. “No,” I said. “You stay outside. You’ve been a bad dog.” And I closed the screed door on her.

She watched me disappear into the family room. Once out of sight I went out the other door and back into the kitchen where she couldn’t see me watching her. She sat at the door a few minutes waiting and hoping that I or somebody might return and let her in. When no one did, she went over to the flower bed, sniffed at the hole she had made, and then returned to the patio door and lay down to wait.

By this time I wasn’t mad any more. After all, she was so cute; I just couldn’t stay mad too long. I came out of hiding and slid open the door.

“Come on in,” I said resignedly. “I hope you’ve learned your lesson.”

She trotted in and stood next to me.

“Now I don’t want any more of this digging, do you understand?” I asked, still keeping a stern tone in my voice. She looked up at me innocently. “OK. You can stay inside.”

I turned to go to my room and Burney followed closely, so closely I almost tripped over her again.

“Burney!” I yelled. “Move out of the way!”

But she wouldn’t. She stayed right next to me. I smiled in spite of myself, sat down in the middle of the hallway, and pulled her into my lap.

“All right, all right,” I said, rubbing her head between my hands the way she liked. “I’m not mad at you anymore. I love you,” and gave her a kiss on the nose. She licked mine as I laughed and hugged her. “But you can’t dig in Mom’s flower bed. OK?”

She smiled that doggie smile of hers, and that hind end wiggled with a vengeance. I laughed again.

“Go on now,” I said pushing her away. “Go play. Leave me alone.”

She jumped off my lap and sped down the hall, losing her footing on the wood entryway and sliding into the wall. I cracked up. She regained her composure, took off again, and in a minute she was back squeaking her obnoxious piece of rubber celery, ready to play. I couldn’t believe it. It was as if she had never been in trouble, and I had never punished her. As far as she was concerned, it was time to play.

I grabbed for the celery, and she held on tight, letting out a playful growl.

“Well, how am I supposed to play with you if you won’t give it to me?” I asked. She relinquished her hold and sat, her mouth back in that doggie smile, her bobbed tail wiggling, just waiting in anticipation for my throw. I shook my head in disbelief and let it fly. She was gone in a flash. I heard the squeaking and knew she was on her way back. She came back in the room, but instead of bringing it to me, she went to her pillow and lay down. That was enough for her. She knew she had been forgiven, restored to her rightful position. Kind of like Baby on *Dinosaurs*: “I’m the baby, gotta love me.”

I lay down on my bed and looked at her over there primping herself. I’ve learned a lot from Burney. What it means to be loyal. What it means to accept forgiveness, to actually crave it.

I pursed my lips. I’ve always reacted in the complete opposite. Like two weeks ago when I was caught in the web of gossip. It had seemed fun at the time, being with the “in” group, getting to hear all the juicy gossip, and then being entrusted to pass it on to just the right people. Quite an ego trip.

That was until I realized that none of it was true, that it really hurt Diane, the victim, and that she along with most of the school knew that I was a part of the gossipers. Had I asked for forgiveness either from Diane or God? Had I groveled and hugged their sides until they forgave me? Far from it. I kept as far away from both of them as I could. I avoided Diane like the plague because I was so embarrassed. I avoided God too. I felt so unworthy that I refused to open my Bible because I might taint it.

Yesterday, my mom finally dragged a confession out of me and then told me to get in the car and go over to Diane’s to apologize. Mom’s so subtle.

Well, I did, and it wasn’t easy. I didn’t look Diane in the face while I mumbled out my apologies and asked for her forgiveness. I think I heard her say she forgave me, but I wasn’t really listening. I figured there was no way she would ever really like me again, so I vowed I was still going to avoid her.

When I returned home, Mom asked how it went, and I shrugged a very despondent, “I don’t know.” She sent me to my room to ask God’s forgiveness.

In a way this was both easier and harder. Easier in that I could apologize and not see anyone in front of me, but harder because I knew my whole Christian testimony was shot. The entire school knew I was one of the gossip mongers, so my credibility was nil.

I got on my knees, buried my head in my bedspread, and muffled out my second apology to ask God for forgiveness. Even though the Bible says He forgives and forgets instantaneously, I doubted His sincerity as much as I did Diane's. He was through with me I was sure. He couldn't use such a sinner.

I lay down on my bed and stared at the ceiling, not thinking of anything in particular when I heard a knock on the door.

"Mind if I come in?" Mom asked. I waved her in, and she sat on the edge of the bed.

"Peter or Paul?" she asked. I looked at her like she'd lost it.

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

"Which one do you feel like right now?" she asked.

"Neither," I answered vehemently. "They were *good* Christians. I feel more like Judas."

"Wrong answer and wrong attitude," she replied.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean both of them made mistakes and could have thought God couldn't use them," she answered. "Peter publicly denied Christ three times, and Paul publicly persecuted Christians."

"Yean, but God turned them into great people," I retaliated.

"Wrong answer and wrong attitude again," Mom said. "You're not doing too well on this quiz show I'm afraid."

"What do you mean wrong answer and wrong attitude?"

"God was only able to make them into great people because they accepted God's forgiveness and made themselves available to Him again. You're lying here saying it's impossible. That you're through. Now what kind of attitude is that?"

She walked out, and I was left to think about what she had said. No flashes of revelation, no sudden understanding. Nothing. That is until today. And who taught me?

Burney! No wonder dogs are considered man's best friend. They teach us the most valuable lessons.