



Pedagogy from a Corgi^(Part 2)

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Paul the Apostle tells us "love rejoices in the truth." This is a deeply profound statement for a culture bereft of any absolute point of reference. Paul obviously sees a connection between relating to others and relating to reality. Ultimately, how can we be healthy in our relationships unless we have true beliefs, ordered emotions, and proper actions?

Lady Lucia, my one-year-old Corgi, demonstrated a clearer perspective to me in this area of love. Opening the can of dog treats, she immediately notes the noise and presents herself at her master's feet. Looking at me with big brown eyes, she remembers the actions that brought about the reward last time. Immediately, she begins the routine even before I say anything. She sits. She lays. She rolls over. Sometimes this ends with the explanation point of a bark.

I laugh. I tell her to sit. She sits. Then lays. Then rolls over. What can be done to get her to listen? Still not

giving her any treats, I try again. She sits on command. Then she lays on command. The reward is given.

You see, my dog has a hard time with the difference between obedience to her master and tricks for treats. At her core, I'm afraid she's a legalist—doing sets of behavior to avoid punishment or to receive rewards.

Humans, too, often have a view similar to the dog's. They see God as the taskmaster who demands tricks for treats. And I've even seen some Christians, many who claim to have a strong relationship with God, mustering up all the tricks they can, not to love to God in obedience, but to receive special blessings. Of course, blessing is always a part of loving God, but it isn't what loving God is essentially about.

Oh how often God puts up with our silliness! How often He must smile at our ridiculous attempts at getting things from his hand, instead of coming to Him as friend and child. How longsuffering He must be to help us understand!

Both the Old and New Testaments tell us our purpose in life is not merely about good behaviors. From the

beginning, God loves. He loves when He creates. He loves when He calls. He loves when He sends His only begotten Son. The reason He gives commands in the Scripture is because He loves—not because He wants us to perform arbitrary tricks. Rather, He wants us to flourish by learning His character, His ways, His purposes. It was for this reason we were made, called, and redeemed.

Legalism paralyzes the soul, but obedience in love brings nourishment. May we look afresh at God's loving commands and find in them the reflection of His love and the heart of our freedom.

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