

## CATS AND DOGS

The difference between cats and dogs: Dogs have masters; cats have staff.

A dog, at least a good dog, wants nothing more than to please his master by consistently demonstrating heart-felt love and obedience to his master's commands. From what I have seen of cats, they are more interested in their "owners" meeting their needs and pleasing them.

I submit we all have this choice in our approach to our relationship with God: Will we be like dogs, or like cats?

I have seen a little book listing all the verses containing promises of God. It doesn't provide the context telling to whom and under what conditions the promises are made—it just gives the text of the verse describing the promise. I call it the Cat Christian's spiritual handbook. It is a list of all the things God "owes you" because He "promised." There is a whole industry of prosperity and inspirational preachers catering to Cat Christians.

We have all heard the reasoning: I'm a child of God, and God wants what is best for His children—the very best. Or the spiritual teenager argument—"But you promised!"

Cat Christians are easily identified: they are focused on this life instead of the eternal. What can God do for me NOW? And what does God owe me because He PROMISED and cannot go back on His promises? Does any of this have a familiar ring to it? Is any of it creeping into your prayer life and your relationship with God? If so, ask yourself, is this what God really expects and wants from His followers?

Let's step back a minute and look at the big picture: Why are we here?

I mean, why did God go to all the trouble of creating this entire universe including this beautiful planet and creating mankind in the first place?

He knew mankind would rebel against Him. He knew that He would have to lower Himself lower than his angels by being born as a man in order to suffer and die a very painful and shameful death to make a way for some of mankind to spend eternity with Him. So I have asked myself, “Why did He go to all that trouble?”

The only answer I can come up with is His great love. “For God so loved the world...” Think about that for a moment. He loved “the world”— EVERY HUMAN BEING, so much that He did all that so that to those who chose to “receive Him,” according to John 1:12, He gave “the right **to become** children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

This is a love that is beyond our human understanding. If we think about it long enough, it will reduce us to tears of gratitude. And to love for Him for what He has done for us. And isn't that what God wants from us? The greater the love, the more it wants to be reciprocated. God did all of this out of His love for us. And what does He want from us? He wants that love reciprocated. In the first three Gospels, it is recorded that Jesus said the greatest commandment was this:

**YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'**

People who have dogs usually grow to love them because of the unconditional love their dog shows for them.

And how does a dog demonstrate his love for his master?

First: By recognizing his master's authority over him. Cat Christians are happy to talk about how they are “children of God” and “heirs with Christ,” but I've had some even get offended when I suggest that our

position in this life is more about being God's slave or bond-servant. The picture is given to us in Deuteronomy 15:16-17, where the Hebrews are commanded to release a fellow Hebrew who has been sold into slavery to them after six years of service, with this exception:

**16 It shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; 17 then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant.**

We all signed up for this mission. We voluntarily chose Him as our Lord and Savior. Too many want Him as their Savior, but Lord of their life, not so much. Cat Christians. Sorry. It's like the old song about "Love and Marriage." You can't have one without the other. Check the New Testament epistles: John, Paul, Peter, James and Jude all called themselves "bond-servants" of God or Christ. In Philippians 2:7, Paul writes that Jesus "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant." That is what we should be focusing on---serving Him as our rightful Master with a true servant's heart of humility, gratitude and yes, love.

Think about it. Our savior is the eternal king of everything and everyone. We owe him our loyalty, obedience and devotion. No earthly king ever expected less of his subjects. Neither does He.

The second way a dog demonstrates his love for his master: By wanting to be close to his master and spending as much time with him as he can. How much time do you spend with God? The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians, "pray without ceasing." When you love someone, you want to be near them and spend time with them.

Loving God is no different. That includes wanting to follow Him, as a good dog wants to follow his master wherever he goes. Whenever his master

leaves the house, the dog wants to go with him. In John 10:27, **Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”** In Mark 8:34 He said, **“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.**

The third way a dog demonstrates his love for his master: By doing his best to be obedient to his Master. Many times Jesus said to His disciples, **“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”** Three times in John 14 alone. John wrote in 1 John 2: 3-5: **By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.**

Loving God is not just a warm fuzzy feeling. God wants that love demonstrated by your obedience. Day by day. Minute by minute. But how is that humanly possible? It’s not.

It’s only possible by submitting your will to God’s will. By being led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus told his disciples in John 15:5,

**“He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”** That is, nothing that can please God.

The Apostle Paul explained how we “abide in Him” in Romans 8:1-6, and 12-14:

**Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those**

who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. **6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.**

**12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God,**

Do you seek to be led by the Spirit? Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, predicts a grim eternity for those who don't.

In Galatians 6:7-8, Paul wrote, **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.**

In 1 John 4:8 and 16, the Apostle wrote that **God is love**. As such, he went to all the trouble for the human race to have a relationship with those who truly trusted Him. There can be no meaningful relationship with anyone apart from trust. John 3:16 makes trust the basis of the relationship with God that results in eternal life: “believes” is a translation of the Greek word “pisteao”, which means “trusts and keeps on trusting”, a continuing action verb in the Greek present tense. Do you trust him completely, enough to turn your life over to Him?

Without that complete and unconditional trust, it is difficult, if not impossible, to have the kind of relationship that results in eternal life. Jesus said on his sermon on the mount, recorded in Matthew 7:21-24:

**“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not**

prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, **‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’**

They performed all kinds of good works, but at the end of the day, the relationship with God wasn’t there. And that’s what counts.

When Jesus later says in Matthew 10:28, **“fear Him who is able to destroy both the body and the soul in hell”** I think he is talking about fearing those words: “I never knew you.”

So what will it be? Is God there as a heavenly Genie to answer your prayers for earthly blessings, or are you here to truly make Him Lord of your life, seek to be led by His Spirit, and serve Him out of love? Is God in your life to do your will, or are you in a relationship with Him to do His will? Cat or Dog?