

Disciplining Children: Lessons Learned from my Airedale

By Jim Seghers

As I brought the puppy home I reflected smugly that I had purchased the perfect pet. He was tiny, cute, affectionate - in short, adorable. I named him Lance. However, as the weeks passed into months a terrible realization crashed upon me. My "perfect" pet suffered the consequences of Original Sin. He had grown into a 45-lb. dog from hell! To be sure, he was still affectionate, but apart from that one barely redeeming quality, he had adopted Lucifer's motto, "I will not serve!" The climax was reached when we went for a fateful walk in the neighborhood.

The word "walk", you must understand, is used in an inexact sense. At times I was dragged along behind Lance as he charged ahead. On other occasions I was pulling him away from baptizing shrubs and trees, or from depositing unwanted memorabilia on neighborhood lawns. The climax of this excursion was reached as we approached a child holding an ice cream cone in one hand and his mother with the other. As we passed Lance gulped down the scoop of ice cream without breaking stride, the cone or damaging the child's hand. Something had to be done.

So, on one cool Saturday morning I gathered in a nearby park with other frazzled owners to have the unruly brute tamed in Dog Obedience School. My already low spirits hit bottom when the instructor introduced himself. I had hoped for a 6'4", 220 lb. retired Marine drill instructor with an attitude. Instead, I was looking at a diminutive, amiable man who couldn't scare infants.

As the classes progressed it was amazing to observe each undisciplined beast responding to his every command. Then an awful realization dawned upon me. We weren't there for **dog** obedience training, but for **owner** obedience training. Undisciplined dogs are the product of undisciplined, inconsistent owners. To be sure we learned helpful techniques, but the primary lesson taught was that discipline began and ended with consistent owners. What I learned from my Airedale applies to raising children.

The heart of disciplining children is training them in **obedience**, which is **love in action**. Children who are disobedient to their parents will find it very difficult to be obedient to their Heavenly Father. The heart of discipline is forming in children the habit of **controlling their will** when they don't feel like it. Parents must begin this training early. It must be maintained with great consistency and watchfulness. That, of course, is the rub because it requires great self-discipline on the part of the parents. That's hard work. However, the pay off is substantial - godly children whose company you enjoy, not unruly brats whose behavior you dread.

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