

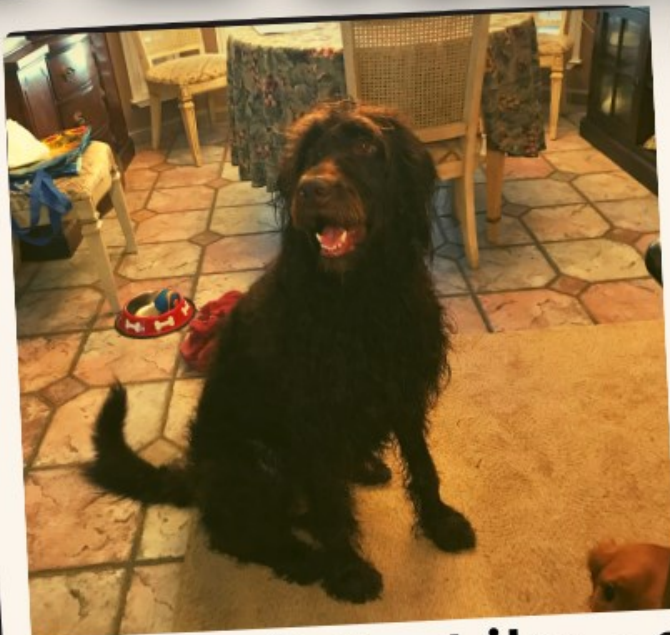


PARKSIDE

WWW.PARKSIDEVISALIA.ORG

The weekly newsletter article of Parkside Chapel

LIFE NEWS



Don't Be Like
Sherlock

**BY RON STORY
COMMUNITY LIFE PASTOR**

Sherlock hates Riley! Every time he sees Riley, Sherlock is filled with raging anger. He growls and snarls and it takes every bit of energy on my part to hold him back and keep him from biting Riley's head off!

I have talked to Sherlock about forgiveness. I have explained to him that no matter what Riley has done or how deeply Riley has hurt him, that God commands Sherlock to forgive him. It's been several years and so far Sherlock is not hearing me. Overall, Sherlock is really good natured. He loves everyone; man, woman, especially children, and animals ... everyone except Riley. Sherlock hates Riley!

Perhaps I should explain ... Sherlock is our 100-pound labradoodle. He just turned 8 years old, and we have had

him since he was a puppy. We even took him to obedience training, and it worked so well for him that Peggy wanted to take me for obedience training, too! He is a great dog in so many ways except when it comes to Riley. Sherlock hates Riley, who, by the way, is not Nigel and Melany's outstanding #2 son, but a 12-pound Malti Apso little ball of fur.

I regularly take Sherlock for a morning walk, or should I say, at 100 pounds ... he takes me. Sherlock loves those walks. He loves to greet people and other animals ... except for Riley. Sherlock first met Riley several years ago and at first, he excitedly greeted Riley wanting to make friends as he always does. It seems that Riley suffers from "little dog syndrome." Riley is determined to act tough even if

the other dog is 10 times his size! At their first meeting, as Sherlock and Riley began the initial sniff ritual, Riley went beyond sniffing and bit Sherlock in an area Sherlock has never forgotten ... or forgiven. For one of the few times ever, Sherlock growled and lashed out at Riley in a manner that almost pulled me to the ground. It was all I could do to keep Sherlock from devouring Riley as an appetizer.

That was several years ago. Now, whenever we are out walking and Sherlock sees Riley, he bristles with anger, and I have to restrain him by holding him by the collar. Riley knows the drill and has learned to keep his distance and mind his manners.

Sherlock, on the other hand, loses his cool and for those few moments is robbed of his joy for the day. Sherlock needs to learn to forgive. He needs to understand God's instruction: "Be angry and do not sin." (Ephesians 4:26) He needs to learn to not seek his own revenge but to leave the "getting even" aspect to God. (Romans 12:19) Sherlock needs to comprehend that to forgive is to "release the prisoner and then realize that the prisoner was you!" Sherlock's anger and refusal to forgive is not hurting Riley. Riley has learned to stay out of Sherlock's lane and actually keeps on the opposite side of the street. Sherlock's anger is only hurting himself, raising his own blood pressure, causing him to be choked by his collar and ruining a good walk.

Another thing that Sherlock needs to learn – forgiving does not mean forgetting. We are commanded to forgive as God in Christ forgave us (Ephesians 4:32), but we can't forget. Forgiveness means leaving the "getting even" part to God and when we are reminded of the hurt, we must choose to:

- Not dwell on the offense,
- Not bring it up again to that person,
- Not talk about it to others (except for a trusted counselor).

Finally, forgiving a person (or dog) does not mean we are instantly "best friends." We must forgive them but regaining trust takes time. They lost our trust when they hurt us, and it usually takes evidence of true repentance on their part before we can fully trust them again. We must forgive but reconciliation requires time for trust to be restored.

I'm not sure that Sherlock will ever trust Riley again but for his own peace and joy he needs to forgive him. I plan to read this article to Sherlock in the hope that he will repent of his bitterness and obey God's instruction to forgive. Maybe you know someone that needs this reminder? Maybe you see that someone in the mirror?

Don't be like Sherlock!



Ron Story, Community Life Pastor
ron@parksidevisalia.org