



## From the Pastor

### God Keeps the Back Door Open

We have a beagle by the name of “Chewy.” God used her to teach us something about Him. Let me explain.

We love Chewy in the way that one comes to love a dog. She was mostly an outside dog to begin with but then she hurt her leg and needed to stay inside for a month and then came winter; so now Chewy is in the house most of the time. She keeps Mindy company while Ryan and I are out of the house. She keeps our growth group entertained with her “talking” to some of the people who attend the group or by her snoring.

Every night we have a ritual with Chewy. At around 9:00 pm one of us (usually me) wakes her up from sleeping on the couch, walks her one last time, and then puts her in her cage for the night. One night last week, I hooked the leash on Chewy’s collar and took her out. My ritual is to take her through our garage, open the back door of the garage, and go outside. As I opened the back door there was deer about ten yards from the door. Chewy saw it before I did and she raced after it. I was holding on to the leash but it snapped off her collar. Apparently, I had hooked onto the wrong metal loop, a weaker one that only held dog tags, and Chewy was able to break free.

I watched as Chewy took off after the deer into the woods in the back of our home. I yelled out, “Chewy!” which to a beagle means absolutely nothing. She just kept on running into the woods. I knew that I had to try to find her to bring her home. I had not planned for this adventure. I was wearing my moccasins and happily I was still dressed and had not changed into my bathrobe. Imagine the sight of me in the woods wearing a bathrobe, on second thought, don’t imagine that. I rushed into the home and picked up a flashlight and some dog treats. So now, I was ready with the leash, treats and the light. When I yelled “Chewy!” Mindy heard me and came outside to help.

You have to know something about beagles. They don’t listen well. When they are on a scent, you cannot get their attention. Moreover, when they are not on a scent and you chase after them they think it’s a game and keep running away from you.

Now Mindy was outside directing me from the yard and I was in the woods looking for Chewy. I went into the area that I thought I saw her go and saw and heard nothing. Mindy tried to see her but she couldn’t either. We thought she was lost. But about fifteen minutes later Chewy came near the house and so Mindy started to chase after her. Chewy did what all beagles do, she ran into the woods expecting us to gleefully come chasing after her. There was no glee coming from Mindy or me.

We didn't know what to do because we knew that we were not going to find our dog that night. Finally, I decided to leave a light on outside and a light on in the garage. I also left the back door and her cage door open and left two treats in her cage. Then Mindy and I went to bed.

The next morning I went into the garage and heard Chewy yawning as she was waking up from a good night's sleep in her cage. The whole Pavelski family was glad to have Chewy home.

I thought, "Is there a spiritual lesson to learn from this experience?" And I realized that there is.

God loves you and me. There are times when we run after things that God doesn't want us to chase after. However, God doesn't force us to follow Him, even as believers. We still sin. And God in His love for us leaves that back door open so that we can come back home after our evening escape. He's sad when we run away. He wants us to stay near to Him so that we can always live in His love. When we run from Him He is unable to care for us. Nevertheless, He always leaves the back door open so that we can return. God does not always treat us as our sins deserve, for which I am grateful! I don't know where you are with God today, but if you are far away, or if you know someone who is far away, I give you this message for you or for your friend; God always keeps the back door open.

In Him and for His glory,

Pastor Art

