

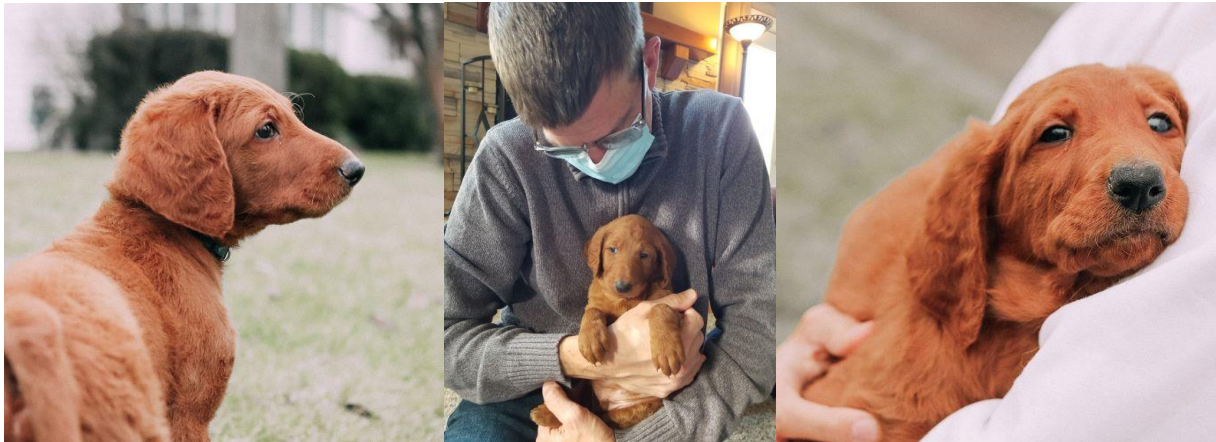
06.23.21 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “The Power of a Puppy”

Scripture Readings: [Hosea 11:1-4](#); [1 Corinthians 13](#); [1 John 4:7-21](#)

Reflection: Pastor Henry

This past Christmas, we got an 8-week old, 11 pound male labradoodle puppy. Here are some pictures of him when we picked him up.



So, why am showing you and telling you about my puppy? Because puppies (and other pets too...if you happen to be a cat person, we won't hold it against you) have the ability and power to help us not only learn about but also develop, the virtues of unconditional love and sacrificial service that Pastor Doug talked about this past Sunday morning during [his message](#). Virtues that all of us need the Spirit of God to imprint in our own hearts.

Researchers consistently note for us the benefits that pets have in our social, relational, and emotional development as human beings. To learn more about these benefits, read some of these:

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the_benefits_of_a_family_pet

<https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/archive/assets/pdfs/empathy-connection1.pdf>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/04/14/want-to-raise-empathetic-kids-get-them-a-dog/>

How do puppies have the power and ability to teach us about sacrificial service and unconditional love?

Puppies teach us about sacrificial service because for them to grow and develop, they are dependent upon us to provide for them. Puppies need us to feed them, fill their water bowl, take them outside to pee (even at 2 AM when it's 10 degrees outside), brush them, give them a bath, and take them on walks. If a puppy's owner is not willing to do these things, to sacrificially serve their puppy, the puppy will not grow and flourish. Our puppies teach us about sacrificial service because they need us to sacrificially serve them day after day after day.

Puppies teach us about unconditional love in at least two different ways. First, they teach us about unconditional love when they mess up or get into “trouble.” When they pee in the middle of the living room floor, or when they eat your dinner or dessert off your plate when you are not looking, or when they throw up

all over your shoes whatever it was they ate on the walk, or when they chase after the bunny whose knows where through the whole neighborhood (“...²The more I called them, the more they went from me...” Hosea 11:2), we as their owners have a choice as to how we are going to respond to such behavior. We can respond with conditional love or unconditional love. Puppies, just like you, and everyone else around you, need lots and lots of our unconditional love.

Another way our puppies teach us about unconditional love is how they greet and treat us when they see us. I don't know about you, but 99 times out of 100, my dogs are happy to see me and to give their love and affection to me. It doesn't matter the time of day or night, the type of weather (warm or cold, dry or wet), how long I was away from them (5 minutes, 5 hours, or 5 days), what kind of day I am having (good or not so good), my puppy is always ready to give me some unconditional love. Day after day after day, no matter what the conditions, my puppy is ready to give me unconditional love.

I wonder, did God create and give us puppies to help us learn about and understand more fully His sacrificial and unconditional love for us? Did God give us puppies to reveal to us and teach us about the conditions of our own hearts? Did God give us puppies to teach us how we are called to sacrificially serve and love all of those around us unconditionally? Did God give us puppies in order to help us grow into the type of people He calls us to be? Do puppies have the power to do these things?

Prayer:

God, you love each one of us sacrificially and unconditionally. Thank you for your love! God, you call us to love those around us sacrificially and unconditionally. Spirit of God, imprint this type of love within our hearts. In Jesus' name. AMEN.

Action Item for the Day/Week:

Recall the pet(s) you've had throughout your life and reflect on your relationships with them. What did you learn about yourself and God from them? Never had a pet of your own? Ask someone you know who currently has or has had a pet what, if anything, they learned about themselves and God through their relationship with their pet.

Songs for today:

[I Give You My Heart](#)

[Everyone Needs Compassion](#)

[Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart](#)

[Forgiven](#)