

Week of 1/29/06

We here at 2nd Thief Ministries thank the Lord for His faithfulness and goodness to this Ministry. Last week was the best week yet in terms of activity here at the website. Numerous friends of the Ministry are taking advantage of the outstanding **Online Bible Study** that is being taught by Larry Gusman. People are excited about joining us at the upcoming events that are planned (and being planned) for this year. And as always we appreciate the prayers, encouraging words and tangible support that enables us to continue sharing the **love, joy, peace and freedom that comes with a relationship with God through Jesus.**

The **Couples Motorcycle Retreat Ride** is scheduled and in the calendar for June. "Mountaintop Baggin' Ride" is the name for the ride and as you read over the following itinerary it will be clear why it was chosen. We will depart from the Haymarket, VA area on the 6th and returning on the 11th. During the first day the 2nd Thief Riders will pick up the **Blue Ridge Parkway** at the North entrance located in the Waynesboro, VA area of the State. We will be riding its entire 469 mile length, stopping at some very scenic points during our journey.

The first night will be spent in Mount Airy, NC which is home to all kinds of "**Mayberry**" memorabilia. All the Riders remember that TV series fondly and enjoy taking a "ride" down memory lane. From there we will head to Asheville, NC. During the day there will be an excursion to **Mt. Mitchell**, the highest point east of the Mississippi.

We will be passing through **The Great Smoky Mountains** traveling to Gatlinburg, TN. Needless to say it is not one of the most visited parks in the Country for nothing. There has been plenty of time allotted to ride (and sit) and enjoy this special area of our great Nation.

The Riders will be heading back into VA the fourth day with an overnight in Galax. Before arriving for the night we will stop at **Grayson Highlands State Park/ Mount Rogers National Recreation Area** where you find the highest point in VA, **Mt. Rogers**. In Galax there is a long held tradition at Rex's theatre to showcase some regional **Blue Grass Music** (also known as Mountain Music) on Fridays and that's where you will find us.

On Saturday we will be riding to WV, "Mountain Mama." The Riders will experience the **New River Gorge Bridge** which is the longest steel arch bridge in the Western Hemisphere with a 1,700' span and

the second highest bridge in the United States at 876'. Time permitting we will also visit Hawk Nest State Park. Summersville is where we will overnight.

Sunday we will be heading back to Virginia and along the way we will stop to have a **Sunday Service** at a scenic overlook along **Highlands Scenic Highway**. It will a time to enjoy some Praise and Worship, a message from God's Word and celebrate the Lord's Supper. From there we will ride to Monterey, VA onto New Market and home. Overall I do not think you could find a better ride anywhere on the east coast.

This was stated last week, but it bears repeating. We have seen first hand how the desire to grow stronger in our faith, coupled with great fellowship (and good food), scenic locations that reveal **God's Majesty** results in blessings all around.

Moving on...if you follow this Byline you know we brought a "little" **Rottweiler puppy** home several months ago and named him Indy. That is short for Independence because he was born on the Fourth of July (cute huh). Well comes the time in all puppies' lives that some **training is in order**. This was made painfully clear to me recently when he ran at me full speed with all **70 lbs of love** (and still growing) and hit me high and to the right. I tried to catch him, but his weight and momentum spun me like a top and we both went down. I was proud of the fact that I managed to hold on to him through it all (who's the Big Dog...I'm the Big Dog). My wife and youngest daughter, judging by their laughter, thought it particularly entertaining. My only regret is that the video camera wasn't on as we were a cinch for the "big money" on AFV.

Indy has certainly been taught the basics ("NO!") since arriving here. Poor guy probably **thought that his name was "No"** considering how many times we used it in the course of a day. He does know the commands, "sit," "come" and he can even "shake" with his left paw upon request. All in all he is doing great at this point in his development.

And why do I have to go through all this training, you ask? Indy has the potential to grow to approximately 140 lbs and what is considered cute and funny at this stage "might" be a problem later. Indy would not be any good to himself or this family (or anyone else in his "sphere of influence") without being trained. With this training I am assuring

that Indy will not get hurt (or hurt anyone else) and be able to fully enjoy his place in our family.

So he and I have begun a **training program** together. To distill it down the program consists of several strategies. First, before doing any training Indy is left in his crate for an hour. That way he will be ready to spend some time with me after being cooped up.

Next we go to a large enough area that will enable us to walk a 20 paces (or up to a 40 paces) "box." In this initial phase this area should be free of distractions. Indy wears a "choke" chain (please no emails until you read *the whole* byline) and is on a 15' soft canvas lead that enables some give and take without you getting "a friction burn" on the palm of your hand.

You start off by walking from one corner of your box to another. I do not look at Indy or give him any verbal commands. When I reach the other corner I stop and stand there for at least a minute or more. No commands, no looking at the dog. Of course, in the beginning Indy didn't care as he was more interested in everything but me. You know, he was conducting "scent investigations" like whom or what went to the bathroom here last. He likes to partake of the local buffet ("my, that piece of wood is tasty...much better than the rock I just sampled"). There are all kinds of things available to interest him.

Now remember I am walking this "box" one side at a time. There is no verbal clue to alert Indy when I begin moving. Therefore what happens is this, I start off and at a certain point (about 15' of lead and the length of my arm) Indy gets a jolt at his collar. This causes him to look for me and when he sees me moving he starts running in my direction. Usually he will run past me and he gets another jolt as he runs out of lead racing ahead of me.

This will happen over and over until eventually an amazing thing happens. Indy realizes that by watching me he no longer gets a jolt on his collar. He will watch me so intently that when I stop he will come and sit beside me with his face looking up at me. When I start to walk off he is right in step with me. He stops when I stop because he is watching me. No more jolts to the collar and of course I am rewarding him at this point for his obedience. Indy is having a grand time too! I keep him out of harms way and he sees and experiences the joy I have for him.

Eventually I will introduce some distractions to this program so we can train him to ignore them. The goal is to have Indy to walk securely by my side. And the ultimate goal is for this to occur with him off the

lead. How can this be done? Indy will be able to accomplish this when he determines that nothing is as satisfying to him as walking together with me. No strange dogs, or people or anything else will be able to distract him because his greatest reward will be me enjoying him and him enjoying me.

"Well Preacher that's nice to know. If this preaching thing doesn't work out maybe **you can train dogs for a living.**" Appreciate the sentiment, but stay with me. Do you know the definition of the word "training?"

Training: activity leading to skilled behavior.

And the word "training" comes from the word "train."

Train: to form by instruction, **discipline**, or drill; to teach so as to make fit, qualified, or proficient.

I like the fact that the word discipline is in the definition of the word "train." That is really what is going on in Indy's training. He is being disciplined to make him fit or **qualified** for our family. Discipline in this instance is not about punishment, but about qualification. In the Scriptures we learn that discipline and training have to do with **right standing** (righteousness). Punishment has to do with judgment (which is reserved for the unbeliever) and unrighteousness.

In 1 Corinthians 9:26-28 we read, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*. And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown*. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. But I **discipline** my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become **disqualified.**"

God impressed upon my heart some interesting similarities of my training up and disciplining of Indy to walk "off-lead" with me and my own "walk" with Him.

"Do not be as the horse or as the mule which has no understanding, whose trappings include **bit and bridle to hold them in check**, otherwise they will not come near to you." Psalm 32:9

Many times in my life I have felt the uncomfortable jolt. This is the jolt that comes when you are only interested in having your own way. Even when you know you could end up hurting yourself or others you still persist. In my younger days (seems like only yesterday) it would

frustrate me. And even if I knew it was God tugging me in the right direction I would immediately try to run off in the wrong direction and get jolted again. This is what God's Word has to say on the matter.

"Have you forgotten how good parents treat children, and that God regards you as his children? My dear children don't shrug off **God's discipline**, but don't be crushed by it either. It's the child he loves that he disciplines; the child he embraces, he also corrects.

God is educating you; that's why you must never drop out. He's treating you as dear children. This trouble you're in isn't punishment; it's training, the normal experience of children. Only irresponsible parents leave children to fend for themselves. Would you prefer an irresponsible God? We respect our own parents for training and not spoiling us, so why not embrace God's training so we can truly live?

While we were children, our parents did what seemed best to them. But God is doing what is best for us, **training us** to live God's holy best. At the time, discipline isn't much fun. It always feels like it's going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for it's the **well-trained** who find themselves mature in their relationship with God." Hebrews 12:5-11 Message

So when you find yourself jolted by circumstances in your life maybe it is because you are ignoring the "Commands" of the Lord. What are you preoccupied with? Are you distracted and looking in the wrong direction at things that could hurt you or others? The jolts in life come only as a result of a lack of discipline on staying focused on what really matters.

"And what is that Preacher," you ask?

Walking contentedly by your "Masters" side, enjoying Him and being enjoyed by Him.

"You learned deep in your heart that GOD disciplines you in the same ways a father disciplines his child. So it's paramount that you keep the commandments of GOD, your God, walk down the roads he shows you and reverently respect him. GOD is about to bring you into a good land, a land with brooks and rivers, springs and lakes, streams out of the hills and through the valleys. It's a land of wheat and barley, of vines and figs and pomegranates, of olives, oil, and honey.

It's land where you'll never go hungry--always food on the table and a roof over your head." Deuteronomy 8:5-9 Message

Godspeed.

Preacher.

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