

# BodyLife Past Article Archive

## Welcome Home!

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The warm lights of the dinning room spill out through opened curtains into the growing darkness of the yard. The alluring aroma of dinner, tender conversation and cheerful laughter drift out through the open windows.

What could be more inviting?

But in the front yard the tension is nearly unbearable.

I am kneeling on the lawn, my eyes on a stray puppy not 15 yards away. It's in her mind that the battle rages.

"Should I or shouldn't I? I really want to, but will I be safe?"

I can see the torment in her eyes. She wants to trust me, but is too afraid of what I might do. She is tired of fending for herself, alone in a cruel world.

But the choice to trust is never easy. Will I take care of her and help her, or will I be like all the others who have hurt her or abandoned her? She doesn't want any more pain, preferring to leave now if my invitation will only bring her added disappointment.

I would love to run to her, sweep her up in my arms and assure her I mean her no harm, but she will not let me. Every time I make the slightest move toward her she moves further away. If I'm going to help her, she will have to risk trusting me. Little does she know that there is probably not a better home in all the world for her than ours.

So many strays show up here, that I think our address must be listed on every fire hydrant in town. There is nothing that evokes more compassion from my wife than a lost or stray dog.

From the moment we spot a strange dog in our front yard, we watch it carefully to see if it's just passing through, or if it is lost. If my wife concludes the later, it will get the royal treatment. We'll invite her into our home and offer her plenty of water and food. Sara will check to see if she has any dog tags, and if she does she will call the owners right away and let them know their dog is safe.

If she has no tags, within a few hours she will be given a bath, including a treatment for fleas. She will be cuddled and coddled and assured she's safe, wonderful and loved. Then Sara will call the dog pound to see

if the owner has contacted them and leaves the dog's description in case they do later. But she will not take it to the pound. No dog will ever die at her hand.

She will also put an ad in the paper describing the lost dog and leaving our phone number. If no one calls in a week, she takes out another ad to offer the dog to a good home and screens every caller until she's satisfied the potential owners are worthy of her dog.

Right now, the dog across from me has no idea all this awaits her if she can overcome her fear. But all the benefits of my house are hers, if she comes. I hold out my hand, offering her food. I know she hasn't eaten in awhile because I can count every rib right through her fur. I coax lovingly, speaking in soft tones, trying to caress her with my words.

She makes a few halting steps toward me, then thinks better of it. She backs off, turning her head away as if to break a spell about to overcome her. The game will continue for awhile. I will not force her into my home, and thus allow her fears to be a risk to my dogs or my children. If she comes, she'll have to come willingly.

Every time I play this game with the latest stray through our neighborhood, I can't help but think how much this pictures God's entreaty to each of us.

He has prepared an incredible place for us in himself and invited us to come into his house and be part of his family. For us to come, however, we will have to trust him. That's not easy when you've been disappointed by others or even when we're unsure that we are worthy of coming to his house.

Yet there he is, patiently extending his hand to us, trying to get closer, until we cower away in fear. Then he backs off so he will not add to our fear, hoping by his gentleness to convince us that we can trust him.

But we've been disappointed so many times before. Perhaps like some of the strays who come to our house, every one we've ever trusted has betrayed that trust. Maybe even things we thought were God in the past turned out to be hurtful, so we really want to be sure this time it is really him. If the truth be told many of us have been exploited by people who came to us in God's name, claiming to know God's will for us, who only had in mind exploiting us for their own needs.

Trust. It is so easy to talk about, but so hard to put into practice. Nothing is more theologically certain than that God is faithful and trustworthy. But learning how to live in that trust through the twists and turns of our lives is the most difficult challenge we face.

No one knows that better than our loving Father. So while we look longingly in his direction, hoping against hope that he is who he claims to be. His soft voice beckons us closer. "It's okay. I love you. I really do."

How I want to believe him. I take a step toward him, but as soon as I do, fear begins to build again. What if he hurts me? What if he makes me do something I'll really hate?

Worse yet, what if this isn't really God at all, just the figment of my imagination. I have too often been suckered into the enemy's trap. I don't know if I can handle the disappointment again.

Fear finally overwhelms trust and we step back again, turning aside, wishing it would all go away and life would be better. But we are still lost, still hungry and know there is no where else to go that can really give us life. We glance back his direction. Should we go? Is it too good to be true?

As difficult as it is for that puppy to trust me, because I can so quickly and easily hurt her, it is far more risky for us to trust God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth. His very presence conveys how powerless and undeserving we are. But he has provided a way. He wants to teach us to trust him far more than we want to learn it.

It took him almost Abraham's entire life to teach him the joy of trusting him. But he did it. Even when he was asked to give up his only son and heir, he trusted God's plan and God's nature enough to set about the task. This, from the one who had risked his wife's virtue by lying to Pharaoh that she was not his wife. This, from the one who had impregnated his wife's maidservant when it didn't appear God would give Sarah the child he promised.

To accomplish that, God did some extraordinary things for Abraham, so that he could know what was in God's heart for him.

Rest assured, God knows how difficult it is for you to trust him.

He is not threatened by that nor angry with you. He simply wants you to keep your eye on him and learn.

He knows that only by trusting him can you participate in relationship with him and enjoy the fullness of life in his household. This is why he created you and why he designed such an extraordinary plan to teach you exactly how to lay aside your fears and walk into his arms.

Then he can scoop you up, hold you closely to himself and fulfill what began in his heart for you since before the creation of the world.

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