

Bad dog? Not anymore!

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Published on *spirituality.com*. May 31, 2007

Dog attacks often make headline news here in my hometown of Brisbane, Australia, and many other places around the world. It's not unnatural for people to be concerned. Who wouldn't want to keep themselves and their children safe from harm?

Yet none of us has to live with a fear of canines. I know from personal experience that everyone in the community can be safe around dogs. This is not just a pat on the head, "you'll be all right" attitude on my part. My confidence is the result of the prayer I did when I was once faced with an aggressive dog.

Every day on my way to and from school I had to pass a certain house where there was a large, snarling dog. I tried to avoid detection by walking on the road, in the gutter, or by tiptoeing past quietly. One afternoon I even took my shoes off so he wouldn't hear me.

But nothing worked. Whenever I passed the front yard of this house, the dog would hurl himself at the fence and then race alongside it, barking and snapping at me aggressively. I was very scared. And I lived with the constant fear that he would actually jump the fence and attack me.

When I told my friends at school they said, "It's your fault. He can smell your fear. It's making him crazy." At first I didn't think their advice was much help. It made me fearful about being fearful.

But one day as I neared the house, I began thinking that perhaps I shouldn't fear this dog. As a student of Christian Science, I knew God, divine Love, was with me. This presence was protecting and caring for me at all times. Reasoning along these lines, I saw that I could be fearless.

This spiritual thinking helped because I was finally able to walk down the street without shaking in my shoes—or removing them. Then I decided that I could do more to deepen my prayer to include this dog as well.

The record of spiritual creation explained in the first chapter of Genesis says, "And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good." (Gen 1:25) As I prayed this way, it occurred to me that an animal's bad behavior was not indicative of the true nature of a creature that God had created good. If God saw what He created as being inherently good, then His creatures must also be good in conduct—and in the way they interact with people.

This idea was further strengthened as I pondered what Mary Baker Eddy wrote in her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. "All of God's creatures, moving in the harmony of Science, are harmless, useful, indestructible." (514:28-30)

From then on each day as I went by this particular dog, I said out loud to him, "You are God's creature, and you are kind and nice. That's the way God made you, and that's the way you act."

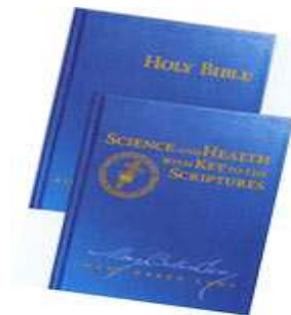
Well one day when I walked by, the dog was actually quiet. There was not one ferocious bark or snarl. I was surprised and a bit taken aback. I thought, "Now don't get too excited. Maybe he just doesn't feel like barking today."

Then the next day when I went by, he came to the fence acting very well-behaved and just looked at me. I was even more amazed. The following day he sat quietly waiting for me to arrive. Then he wagged his tail. From then on this dog never snarled at me again.

I was so glad to be able to walk down that street without any fear of being attacked. I was also thrilled that my prayer had totally changed the dog's behavior. Or had it?

As I thought about this incident, I had an important realization. Prayer hadn't changed this particular animal; it had changed me. In gaining a spiritual perspective on God's creatures, I no longer thought of this dog as vicious and harmful. That was the first change in my thinking. The second change was my confident acceptance that this animal was created by God, and thus good and gentle. I had nothing to fear.

Since this experience, my fear of being attacked by any dog has gone. As a result of prayer I am confident and calm. I appreciate the intelligence, and, yes, charm of these animals. I know that they are governed by God, just as I am. Each of us can get rid of any fear associated with God's creatures, act responsibly with them, and be safe.



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***Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, is her textbook on Christian Science healing practice and her class textbook in teaching Christian Science healing.**

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