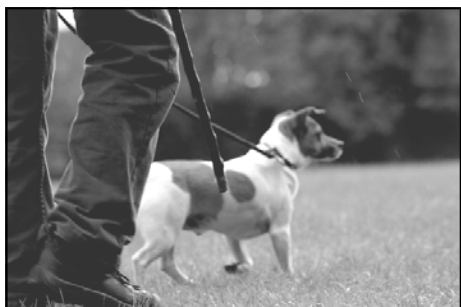




Dear Ministry Partner,

We never know when God is going to get right in our face and teach us a lesson. I (Jennifer) had this experience this past fall when I got a spiritual lesson from a dog. I know it sounds strange, but while on my jog in the park God used an old man and his dog to teach me an important lesson.

As I was jogging in the park an old man who was training his dog to walk with him caught my attention. The dog was a little fur ball of energy, jittering with excitement as they walked through the park. He was not at all interested in walking with the old man. He was instead interested in everything else at the park and was barking at birds, sniffing rocks, watching other people and running ahead of his owner.



The old man was so patient, each time the dog got too far away, he gently pulled the leash back in. When the dog was by his side he would take a few steps and then stop. The old man looked down to make sure the dog was in step with him. He would then take a few more steps and stop. The old man just wanted the dog to walk with him, to go where he led, and to stop when he stopped.

I realized that this is no different than what God wants from us...to walk with HIM. ***God wants us to follow Him and be in-step with Him wherever He leads.***

Shortly after my walk I was reading Psalm 143 and I found several phrases that contained this same idea. Verses 8-9 say, ***“Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul... for I hide myself in you. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”***

The phrase, “I hide myself in you” stuck out to me. I pictured myself at God’s side, hiding in the fold of His robe. What a peaceful place to be. I have now started praying for God to ***shorten my leash.*** God, don’t let me get too far away from You, pull me closer to Your side, wrap me up in the fold of Your robe.

This is our prayer for you this year. As we begin 2012, we pray that God will ***shorten His leash on you.*** We pray that you will feel the peace of being by God’s side, and that you will follow His lead. He will show you where to go, step by step.

Nathan & Jennifer

Praises and Prayers

Praise: for God bringing together 70% of our financial support! Pray that God will bring in the remaining 30% in the next 3 months, this is truly a God-sized task. But our God is BIG and faithful!

Pray: for all families to draw closer to the Lord and each other this year. Pray that God will “shorten His leash” on all His people.

Praise: for our ministry trip to Texas next month. A current ministry partner, Bruce and Jennifer Pittmann, are hosting the Art of Marriage at their church in Texas Feb 17-18. They have invited us to come for the week and will be introducing us to their friends and church family. Pray for a fruitful trip, full of ministry and changed lives through the Art of Marriage event. Pray we will also have new partners that will feel led to join our ministry team.

**Save
the
Date!
Spring
2012**



Branson, March 16-18
Kansas City, March 16-18
or March 30-April 1
Chicago Area, March 9-11
or March 23-25

FamilyLife now equipped to help Step-Families

Nearly 42% of adults in the U.S. are part of a “blended family”. With so many people trying to relate to stepparents, stepchildren or half siblings, FamilyLife has joined forces with Ron Deal to apply his 25 years of experience toward new resources for blended families.

FamilyLife understands that typical marriage education programs are not sufficient for couples in blended families. Instead issues like ex-spouses, co-parenting, finances, and stepparent expectations become unique challenges for them to tackle.

“FamilyLife is delighted that Ron has joined us. Our efforts to help strengthen families will be enhanced by his expertise. We look forward to coming alongside more families by providing even more relevant tools to help them and future generations become stronger,” said Dr. Dennis Rainey, president, CEO and co-founder of FamilyLife.

Ron Deal is founder and president of Smart Stepfamilies and provides marriage and family training and family ministry consultation to church leaders. As a licensed marriage and family therapist and licensed professional counselor, Deal has extensive experience in local church and family ministry consulting.

“I am thrilled to be part of this ministry expansion. Blended family ministry is often the most neglected type of ministry to couples and families,” said Deal. *“This merger with FamilyLife is going to dramatically amplify our ability to bring practical resources to blended families and empower churches to support families in their community.”*

Quiet Time with Daddy

Lucas asked for a “real” Bible for Christmas this year. Now that he is reading he didn’t want the Children’s Bible’s anymore, he wanted the real thing. I was quite surprised when the morning after Christmas Lucas joined me on the couch for my “quiet time”.

I believe the best thing that we can pray for our children is that they will love God with all their heart all of their life. I am thankful that God is answering my prayer.



Funny Things Kids Say

We recently overheard Allison (our 5 year old) explain the following about Jesus to her four year old cousin Joel.

“Jesus was born on Christmas. He died on Easter for our sins. Sins are when you push or hit people. God brought Jesus back to life. We can’t see Jesus with our eyes, but we know he is with us. Kinda like a toot, you can’t see it, but you **KNOW** it’s



**Weekend To Remember
Fall Update
September-December 2011 Events**

19,973 people *Attended* an event
4,723 people *Recommitted* their lives to Christ
802 people *Surrendered* their life to Christ for