

## **ATTENTION PLEASE!**

Harry Foster

“OH, what a lovely pet!” exclaimed Lionel as a sheepdog puppy ran out to meet him when he was paying a visit to his uncle’s farm. “What is his name, Uncle?”

Mr. Farmer, who was Lionel’s uncle, told him that the dog’s name was Shep, but then he added: “He is not just a pet. We are all workers on this farm and Shep is being trained to work, too.”

That evening Lionel was sitting in the room with Mr. Farmer and, when he had the chance, he asked his uncle what it was that Shep had to learn before he could help with the work. He was told that a sheepdog has to learn three lessons. The first one was very simple. It was just to come when he was called. “He already knows his name,” said uncle, “but he has not yet learned always to come when he is called. He comes quickly enough if he thinks that there is any food, and he might come out of fear if I shouted loudly enough, but that is no use. He will never be a proper sheepdog until he has learned that whenever I call him by name he must come at once, whatever he is doing.”

Lionel wanted to know what the second lesson was, but his uncle would not tell him anymore. “One lesson at a time,” he said laughingly, “whether for little dogs or little boys. After all none of us humans can really work for the Lord Jesus until we have learned always to come when He calls.” It was bedtime, so uncle prayed with him and then sent him off to bed with a reminder about the first lesson.

Next evening Lionel asked his uncle what the second lesson was. Mr. Farmer replied by asking him what he thought. Lionel felt that this was easy, and suggested: “To go where he is told.” “No,” said uncle, “that is the third lesson, and no sheepdog is any use until he has learned it, but there is one that comes before that, lesson number two”.

Lionel had several guesses at what this second lesson was, but none of them was correct, so at last his uncle had to tell him. “It is really simple,” he said, “though I

suppose that it is the hardest lesson of all, especially for a puppy. It is to sit perfectly still."

"Not even to wag his tail?" asked Lionel.

"No," replied Mr. Farmer, "not even that. You see the point about being still is to wait for the master's decision as to when it is time for him to run, and which direction he is to take. If he is moving around he will be tempted to run off too soon, or may not pay proper attention. It is important for a sheepdog to know when to come and where to go, but his real usefulness depends on this second lesson of when to be quite still."

When bedtime came again, Mr. Farmer questioned Lionel about the three lessons that every puppy and every boy should learn. Lionel was able to repeat all three, and he agreed with his uncle that the hardest was just to be quiet and pay attention. "Yes," said uncle, "but it is a lesson worth learning. Lots of Christians are so busy running to and fro that they don't give the Lord time to speak to them and show them His will. They take for granted many things which He did not really want, or they act too soon or too late, just because they have not listened to the words: "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) You can only know if you are still.

When Lionel got back home, he told his mother about the lessons which Shep would have to learn, and went on to say to her: "And uncle says that he does not want just pets; he wants workers."

"Of course," answered his mother. "And it is just the same with the Lord. He loves us, but He doesn't want to keep us as pets: He wants us to work for Him and with Him."

So, boys and girls, we must never think that Christians are just the Lord's pets. We are all to be workers. But for this to be possible we must learn the lesson of being still and paying attention.

**"Here then is my charge:** First, supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings should be made on behalf of all men: for kings and rulers in positions of responsibility, so that our common life may be lived in peace and quiet, with a proper sense of God and of our responsibility to Him for what we do with our lives.

In the sight of God our saviour this is undoubtedly the right thing to pray for; for His purpose is that all men should be saved and come to realise the truth." I Timothy 2:1-4 (Phillips)

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