

DOWN HOME: She's a young dog; will she do tricks?

May 11, 2007

Posted: 5/11/07

DOWN HOME: She's a young dog; will she do tricks?

We took Topanga to school, but I should've worn the dunce cap.

Topanga is our 5-month-old puppy. Years ago, she would've been called a mutt. Today, she's a cava-tsu, a mix between a cavalier King Charles spaniel and a shih tsu. So, she looks like a shih tsu but has a spaniel's floppy, frolicky, I'm-just-happy-to-be-here disposition.

When Joanna told me we signed up for the training course, I figured Topanga's class would be composed of four or five dogs. I figured wrong. It looked more like a dog zoo, with probably 25 to 30 canines. Everything from a Great Dane named Django to a chihuahua named Sonic, who looked like Django's snack.

I thought we were OK but quickly knew we were in trouble when the teacher began by announcing, "Of course, we've (she was speaking on behalf of the dogs) all learned our names and how to sit."

Topanga knows her name. When I holler "Topanga!" she comes running. But Jo and I hadn't even thought about teaching Topanga to sit, since that's why we enrolled her in the doggie college in the first place.

Turns out, we'd been using her name wrong too. Who knew you're only supposed to say a dog's name when you give commands? We'd been calling her name—indiscriminately, it would seem—practically every time we talked to her.

So, the first "lesson" consisted of saying, "Topanga," holding the treat next to my eyes and then giving her the treat after she made eye contact. When she decided she didn't like the treats, she also decided making eye contact wasn't worth the effort.

Now, I'm wondering: If a dog won't make eye contact, does she have something to hide? Or does that just apply to TV cowboys? You can bet I'll keep my eyes on her if she decides to sell aluminum siding door-to-door.

Next, we worked on "sit." Except for the fact Topanga didn't want to look us in the eyes when we said, "Topanga" before we said, "Sit," this part of the lesson went pretty well. But Jo has a theory, and I agree, that Topanga wasn't learning all that much. She just likes to sit.

She also likes to cuddle and have her ears rubbed, so she was the best dog in her class when we learned "quiet time." Come to think of it, if you scratched behind my ears, I might do pretty well at "quiet time" too.

Next week, I hope we can teach Topanga how to ring the bell by the back door when she needs to go outside. If she can't do that, I'm thinking about hanging a cell phone with speed dial around her neck so she can just call us when she needs to do her business.

Driving home sort of frustrated, I wondered how annoyed God must get trying to teach us basic lessons for our own good. And I wondered what God looks at and thinks, "Leash!"

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.