

God & Topanga

July 19, 2011

Of course, I love God more than I love my dog, Topanga. Don't be silly.

God is my Savior and Lord. As Father, God created all that is, supplied me with superb family and friends, infuses my life with joy, grants my next breath, holds tomorrow in divine hands. As Son, he accepted the limitations of humanity and journeyed from heaven to demonstrate to me (and to you, too) the depths of his love, accepted the burden of sin, sacrificed his life to atone for those sins and rose again to defeat death and to transform mortality into immortality. As Spirit, God remains ever-present, infinite help in time of trouble, creative comfort amidst distress, transcendent light in the face of darkness, exhilarating humor in the breach of banality.

So, for those reasons and an infinite number more, I love God more than I love Topanga. After all, without God's goodness, Topanga wouldn't even be part of my life.

Persistent question

Still, that question popped into my head as I made a right turn at a stoplight on the way to work. Do I love God more than I love Topanga? I have no idea where that came from, except perhaps I'd been thinking about Topanga—feeling a bit guilty because the night before, I watched a TV program after I finished some work, even though I knew Topanga really, really, really (dogs can be so enthusiastic) wanted to go for a walk.

Upon reflection, I decided "Do I love Topanga more than I love God?" isn't the correct way to phrase the question. What I specifically wondered (or maybe the Spirit asked me) was this: Do I *act like* I love Topanga more than I love God?

Now, there's a good question.

No ...

From one angle, the answer clearly is no. Topanga is neither an idol nor a substitute for God. My faith and trust lies in God alone. Through my daily life, my family and my vocation, I seek to serve God and follow God's plan, not just for the generic "my life," but for each day of my life. Joanna and I cheerfully and convictionally give our time, energy and skills, as well as our money, in service to God. Obviously, I'm not perfect and never would make a claim to be, but I truthfully can say Topanga never has gotten between me and doing God's will. I have not failed to allocate time, talent, money, passion and commitment into God's kingdom because I lavished any of it on her.

And yes

But from another angle, I've got to admit, it sometimes looks like the answer is yes. I regularly go out of my way to do things for Topanga, just because I know it makes her happy. Often, it's taking her for a walk or simply out to pick up the newspaper or get the mail. It's seeking her out to play a game of fetch. Or scratching her ears and rubbing her belly. Giving her treats just because she will sit. Picking her up and cuddling on the sofa. Tossing her the used dryer sheets so she can tear them to smithereens. Taking her for a ride so she can hang her head out the driver's window, even when the temperature is 102. Letting her lick my face.

Showing love

I do all those things for Topanga because I love her and want her to know it. But how often do I spontaneously do something—anything—just because I know God will get a kick out of it?

Of course, God doesn't look at me with big, brown eyes. God doesn't wag a

tail in sheer delight. God doesn't jump up into my lap and nuzzle my neck. But Topanga shouldn't gain the affection advantage just because she's tangible.

OK, so this question doesn't have a tidy answer. I'm still working it out. But as long as I've still got points to ponder, I've got plenty of possibilities for improving how I show my love for God.