

Why God is a Dog: A Story about Witnessing

"What's this Bernie?" I stared at the paper in front of me. It purported to be "THE GOSPEL IN FOUR EASY STEPS," kind of like crib notes I guess.

"Ah, just something I picked up. Can you believe it? The gospel in four short paragraphs? It seems. . .

"Jimmy! Jimmy Wilkinson." Jimmy Wilkinson was a kid who lived down at the other end of my street during high school, not exactly close to me, but someone I knew. He sat next to me in just about every high school class we had, since he was alphabetically close to me. I hadn't seen the guy since graduation.

"Is that you Williams?" How the heck are you?

"I'm good, good." I introduced him to Bernie. I was intrigued. Jimmy looked like a used car salesman, you know, cheap tie, blazer, greasy hair. What had he been doing for the last 25 years?

I invited him to have a seat with us, and he did, sliding right in next to Bernie. Come to find out, Jimmy had not lost the gift of gab. Beginning with high school graduation he took us through the details of his wanderings through the Midwest after high school, his three failed marriages, cocaine addiction (nearly licked him, he said), and present singleness. I'll spare the details of his life of debauchery. Suffice it to say the guy had lived two or three lives already, and he looked like it too.

". . . and anyway, here I am, by myself again, trying to make a go of this used car lot. (I guessed right.) I guess I hoped for better by this time in life. You know, I feel like I still haven't found what I'm looking for in life."

Aha! If ever there was an opening for sharing the gospel, this was it. This was my lucky day (well, you know what I mean). Out of the corner of my eye I caught the first paragraphs of "THE GOSPEL IN FOUR EASY STEPS" and realized that this *must* be a divine appointment, what with this opening, and the outline of the gospel laying right there in front of me, why, if I couldn't pull this off now, then I should be ashamed of myself. It was the perfect opportunity, it was. . .

". . . and I don't know, I guess I feel like God has deserted me." Good grief! This is too good to be true. I only hoped my mouth wasn't hanging open in amazement. . . "and I don't even know what God is like."

"Jimmy," I said, quickly scanning the first paragraph of "THE GOSPEL IN FOUR EASY STEPS," "God is like, well, he's like, like. . . a dog." What?! What did I say that for? Anyway, I was stuck with it now, I might as well go with it. . .

"Huh?"

"Yeah, God is like a dog, Jimmy." I tried to sound confident and matter-of-fact about it.

"Are you still smoking dope, Williams?"

"Oh, come on, Jimmy, you know I never touched the stuff."

"Well, you could've fooled me. God is a *dog*? Something just sounds weird about that."

"Well, stay with me, now." Bernie had a bemused expression on his face. "You remember that dog you had back in high school? The one with the ugly face and short legs? What was his name?"

"Randy. Man, I haven't thought about that dog for a long time. What a dumb dog that was. I must have beat him in the head with a rolled up newspaper too much, or kicked him around too much."

"What happened when you kicked him or beat him?"

"Well, the stupid dog came right back to me, followed me everywhere, all the time with that silly grin on his face."

"That's what I mean. God is Randy. I mean, a man and his dog are sorta meant to be together right? It's just the nature of things."

"There you go again. I have a hard time thinking of God as a sawed off, stupid mutt like Randy. I mean, Randy fathered most of the pups in the neighborhood. Did I tell you about. . ." I quickly glanced down at the paper in front of me. Somehow, I felt the need to get back to the subject, that we were in danger of veering off course. Looking down, I glanced over the next section entitled "What is humanity's problem?"

"Well, you can't push the analogy *too* far, Jimmy. What I mean is that no matter how hard you tried to get away from Randy, he followed, right?"

"Well, yeah."

"And no matter how much you beat on him, he forgave you, right?"

"Well, I guess you might call it that."

"I mean, Randy loved you, right?" He was (looking at #3 on the sheet) showing that he accepted you, no matter what, right?" I was making headway, now, I was close.

"Well, I suppose he did. Yeah, I guess so. Yeah, I kinda miss that dog. I really do."

I sat back, folded my arms, and let out a sigh of contentment. I couldn't help but smile just a little at my accomplishment. Call it imaginative orthodoxy, if you will. I had translated the gospel into the language of the common man, made it relevant, timely, meaningful. Wait until I tell my small group, I thought. I mean, I have him to admit THE GOSPEL IN FOUR EASY STEPS was easy! It just needed a little revision, that's all, a little creativity, contextualization. Now I needed to move right to the big question, bring it home, make it personal, close the deal. I looked down at Point Four, "How can Jesus be your Savior," took a breath, and started to move in. . .

". . . and I think knowing God is like sex." What??? Bernie? *What* is he talking about? What's happening?

". . . and intercourse is an analogy for. . ." Jimmy was on the edge of his seat, rapt in attention.

"Let's not go there Bernie." I could tell this analogy would do Jimmy no good at all, even though there *was* some truth in what Bernie said. Some metaphors are best left unsaid.

Bernie began to protest, but just then the waitress came by to ask if we wanted dessert. Boy, was I glad to see her! Things really wrapped up after that. Bernie and Jimmy had another discussion which, well, I can't really remember much of it, or maybe I just don't want to remember it. Maybe I just blocked it out. Maybe Bernie can fill you in. But I never got back to spiritual matters with Jimmy and before I knew it, he had to leave.

I thought about giving him a copy of "THE GOSPEL IN FOUR EASY STEPS" to take with him, but, I don't know, since it had no dog in it, I wasn't sure he'd understand what it was about. I mean, we really didn't talk about the Bible, and I wasn't sure Jimmy would understand things, that he had any familiarity with the Bible. Ultimately, I felt like a bit of a failure since I never popped the big question to Jimmy.

But here's the thing: I kind of miss Randy too. Maybe we'll get another dog soon.