

## Jake's Progress

In some ways, we hesitate to write about our dog again but the interest so many have shown encourages us to write just once more. Then he can fade into obscurity and anonymity again! For any who did not read last month's magazine: he was rescued from certain death in Croatia and again at our UK border control. In the providence of the Lord he ended up with us, much to our surprise and, no doubt, after his first bewilderment, to his delight. We named him Jake.



Jake contemplating his next move

Most of us are scarred in some ways from the past, just as he has been and only love can heal. Sometimes what masquerades as love, is anything but --- feeble sentimentality, weakening pity, self-centred do-gooding, or possessiveness. To love and heal Jake from his past we know that we have to avoid these pitfalls.

We also have to learn to love others with no hidden agendas.

Jake is good at attention-seeking – aren't we all? Sometimes it can land us in big problems. One evening, we watched him stalk the cat: he stepped over a small stool, balanced precariously on a basket of logs, then stepped on to a narrow windowsill and began to edge his way along it. We ignored the sideways glances in our direction, so that he began to learn that we did not respond to his demands for attention. Then disaster hit (what better way to learn?). He fell off the windowsill, brought the blind with him and the cords wrapped around him in such a way he could hardly move. He had landed on a settee. Of course, we disentangled him and he has never tried it again. It would have been so easy to have stepped in sooner but we doubt that it would have been such an effective lesson for him. Sometimes, we can make catastrophic moves for all sorts of reasons. The Lord allows it. He has given us free will. It is only when we land ourselves in a real mess that he is able to step in and rescue us.

Our dog is not allowed in the chapel. Jake respects that --- usually! One morning the door was left open after our morning prayers. Some visitors were still in the chapel. For Jake, this was his big opportunity. It was quite a victory that, despite the outside chapel door being open, he made no attempt to escape. Instead he leapt around the chapel. Every leap was saying, 'I am here, it is ME!' We removed him before he knocked someone over. Our desire for attention is usually more subtle but that doesn't mean that it isn't there. Sometimes, it comes along the line of, 'look how busy I am', 'look how good (holy) I am' or, and we have met this quite often, 'look what a rebel I am'. This can all fall away when we realise that we are loved by Jesus. We can go quietly through life secure in him without drawing attention to ourselves, just as we hope that Jake will realise that he can trust our love completely and he doesn't have to put on a big performance to make us take notice.

We have noticed that Jake will sometimes contemplate his next move --- the next move invariably being something he should not do. We say to him (not that he can understand!) that he is putting temptation in his path. If we look at something long enough, or often enough, eventually temptation will become overpowering. It is said that after looking at pornography on the internet only twice, you are hooked. Jesus spoke about this when he said, 'If your right eye causes you to stumble, --- throw it away.'<sup>i</sup>

Jake has a liking for shoes, one pair in particular. During our morning prayers we heard a few thuds. One of us went to investigate – there, neatly laid out on the floor, were our shoes. There was no sign of the dog – suspicious. He usually lies across the door ready for us to fall over him when we leave the chapel. He was discovered in the lounge gnawing happily at a sandal. Much to his chagrin it was removed. We also, later that day, placed all the shoes in a cupboard, closing the door firmly. We removed the temptation. Jesus spoke about removing temptation in our lives. This was what he meant when he said, 'If your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off.'<sup>ii</sup> It may be a relationship, a love of possessions, a book – the list is endless, but the answer is the same.

Perhaps, in twelve months, we will have the perfect dog, perhaps, perhaps!! He is beginning to realise already that there will always be forgiveness, discipline and love, and so it is with us and our God. He loves us, he forgives us, but he also disciplines us.

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<sup>i</sup> Matt 5:29 NIV

<sup>ii</sup> Matt 5:30 NIV