

What an adventure we've experienced watching the little puppy we call Grace grow up before our eyes. Last year at this time we had known her only about sixteen weeks, she weighed 41 pounds, and she recognized about 25 words. Now, after sixteen months, Grace has reached her mature weight of 58 pounds, and she knows more than 40 words.

Grace needs lots of activity. That's certainly a challenge living in a small apartment. She spends at least three hours a day out on the grounds, which includes about an hour of running. The apartment balcony serves as an essential component for Grace to give her much-needed connection with the outdoors. The dog park at our current apartment provides her a safe place to run free and play with other dogs.

While we teach Grace new things daily, what's more interesting is what Grace teaches us. One of the many things that we marvel about her revolves around whole the matter of trust. Not only does Grace trust us implicitly, she's on her honor in the house. In everything, Grace has proven herself completely trustworthy.

You might say God has *graced* her to trust us. While she'll let us know when she wants something and doesn't always agree with us, Grace is very considerate, patient, obedient, clean, eager to please, and loving. It almost sounds like the Scout's Motto, doesn't it?

From the beginning, Grace trusted us. As a ten-week-old puppy, she rested peacefully in Betsy's lap as she traveled in a foreign machine to a strange place – never to see her birth home or family again. For thirteen weeks, she submitted obediently to being locked in a cage at night and when left alone. When we moved, she curled up in an empty closet as the only place she knew as home was invaded by strangers who were stripping the place of its contents. She accepts without question food, water, and even medicine. She waits alone patiently and quietly for our return to a locked car or house.

It seems to us, Grace has the trusting heart of Job. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Such noble character is both remarkable and humbling. Why is this matter of trust so hard for us? What are we trusting in today? Is it a bank account, stocks, a job, the government, a pension, modern medicine? All of these will fail.

Our only hope is in the Lord and the good news of the Savior sent from God.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.
(Matthew 1:23)

May we say with the Psalmist, trust in the grace of God, and learn from an innocent animal:

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.
(Psalm 91:2)

Merry Christmas!