

First United Methodist Church

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I've mentioned it before, but it seems there is much one can learn from pets. Or at least there is a lot I can learn from the two cats and one dog that Nancy and I share our home with. Recently I've noticed something Sophie, our dog, does every morning that I believe is an important way to start each day.

I'm usually the first person up in the morning. I think it's the farm boy in me. When the sun comes up...I'm up too. So, at some point in my morning routine I let Sophie out of her kennel, where she has spent the night. What I've noticed is that she, Sophie, has her immediate morning routine just like we humans do, but there is dog-like simplicity, beauty, and brilliance in her routine. Let me explain...

Upon opening the kennel door, Sophie takes a step or two out then begin to stretch. In fact, it's usually just her front half that is out of the kennel with the back half still inside, but she begins to stretch her muscles. The second step in her routine is that she shakes. You know, that wet-dog shake that starts at her nose and ripples all the way down her body to the tip of her tail. After she's had her shake, the final step in her daybreak morning routine is that she comes to greet me and lets me pet her.

Day after day I've watched Sophie do the same thing in the morning. Stretch, Shake, Pet...Stretch, Shake, Pet. Then one morning last week it hit me. Sophie, my Golden Retriever, truly has a great routine to start every day that makes perfect dog sense for her...and has great wisdom for we humans too. You see, she starts out by stretching into the new day, getting her muscles ready for everything the new day will have to offer. Then she shakes off the day that is past. Hopefully there were some pleasant memories of the day past...but it is past and can't be relived. So, good memories or not so good ones, she shakes it off as she prepares for a new day. And finally, she opens herself up to love. She comes to me and lets me pet her and love on her a bit. Of course, in doing so, she also usually gives me a lick or two, expressing her love for me, as well. Once those three things are accomplished, Sophie's ready to move into the rest of her day.

After watching and reflecting on that routine, I truly see the value and beauty of it. I think I'm going to try it too. I'm going to stretch my way into a new day, in some way stretching myself (physically, emotionally, spiritually) preparing myself for the day to come. I'm going to shake off the past. Often there's been a challenge or two from the past that wants to cling to me and cloud my attitude or perspective on the new day. I just need to shake it off as I begin a new day. And finally, I need to open myself up to love. Whether it's love from Nancy, or other friends and family, love from God, or even love from my pets. Opening myself up to experience the fullness of love, receiving and giving, is such a great way to begin a day.

So, there it is...there's my new dog inspired morning routine; I'm going to stretch, shake, and love my way into each new day. How about you? What's your morning routine look like? I wonder how it would affect our world if we all began our day with three simple words...and actions – Stretch, Shake, Love!

Serving Together,

Pastor Keith

Join us Sunday for the Kickoff of our Summer Series "Splash!" We're exploring the way water is used in the Bible to help communicate God's Good News for each of us. Send us your "Splash" pictures to #downtownsplashin. Sunday worship is at 9:30 am and Wednesday worship is at 6:00 pm. See you there!