

MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH, 3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, NC 27612

NEWS & EVENTS – MARCH 2026

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But now those younger than I mock me, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.
(Job 30:1)

Recently while reflecting on this passage, I wondered about Job's complaint. In one of the many discourses between Job and his *sorry comforters* (his words), this is an intriguing statement about his condition. It seems that although he was once widely respected, he finds himself the object of derision. Suffering has taken its toll. While he considers the low place he inhabits, he assesses the younger generation, and what he considers to be a contributive influence in their degeneration...their fathers. He thought so little about the integrity of these fathers he considered them unworthy to be associated with the dogs of his flock. His guard dogs. Working dogs and walking dogs...they surely teach some life lessons.

In my neighborhood I watch several groups of people walking together. One woman walks a pair of dogs, seemingly well under her control. The only time they show agitation is when they perceive a threat against their mistress, whether it be dog or human. Another man walks a pair of dogs and they wander loosely, stretched out at the far reaches of their leashes, often contending with one another. And he stares intently at the cell phone in his hand, seldom reigning them in. Then there's a young couple that walks an energetic young spaniel. The dog actually appears to walk the human, straining at the end of his leash no matter which one of them is desperately hanging on, barely keeping up as they follow the will of the dog!

I was still a teenager when I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. At nineteen, I was sent to Lackland Air Force Base to attend dog training school where I would be trained as a dog handler. One of the instructors frequently used a phrase that has stuck with me for many decades. *It runs up and down the leash*, he would say. He would explain that if the handler was in control of the dog, that was the proper condition of a military working dog team. But if the dog was in control of the situation, then the handler was being handled. That was an out of order condition. I handled three dogs in my time in the Air Force. Each dog was different. Max was the first. He had never been trained before and the plan was that he would accompany me when I returned to my duty station as long as he was certified. One of the critical certifications was scouting and tracking, where he would find hidden people. He was an outstanding scout dog. But when the real test came, Max failed. When he was released to work off-leash, he would not return to his handler. There was something in him that rebelled against boundaries. So I returned to my home base with a dog named Odin. Look that name up. He was a very aggressive animal, skilled in every aspect and highly intelligent. He was superbly able to work off leash. The third dog was named Duke. He was a drug detection dog and was trained in Korea. His former handler had served his time there and returned to the U.S. and I never met him. In my service in Korea, I began to train with Duke and he seemed to be a relatively docile animal. The only way I knew he was attack-trained was to read his training records. His former handler said he was highly aggressive in gunfire training. A military working dog must be able to pursue an attack when exposed to gunfire, whether it was from an aggressor or coming from the handler. When Duke and I attended our first gunfire training episode, he made no distinction of the enemy. To him it was the person firing the gun. Man's best friend violently attacked me while I squeezed off a round. You might say he was triggered. You can learn a lot from walking dogs and working dogs.

What I've learned from watching dogs, whether walking or working, is that a properly trained dog will walk at the handler's pace. When the handler stops, the dog stops. When the handler moves, the dog moves. Even off leash, the dog will follow the leader. A good dog can show us how a disciple of Christ is supposed to operate. Simply put, we are called to follow, on the leash or off. The Good Lord has established our boundaries, and He is the greatest handler of all of life. In my opinion, the closer I can stay connected, the better life with God becomes. It does run up and down the leash.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam

(If you are unable to attend Mt. Olivet's 11 AM Sunday worship service in person, can go to website www.mobic.org and click on "Worship Services" for live streaming or prior messages.)