

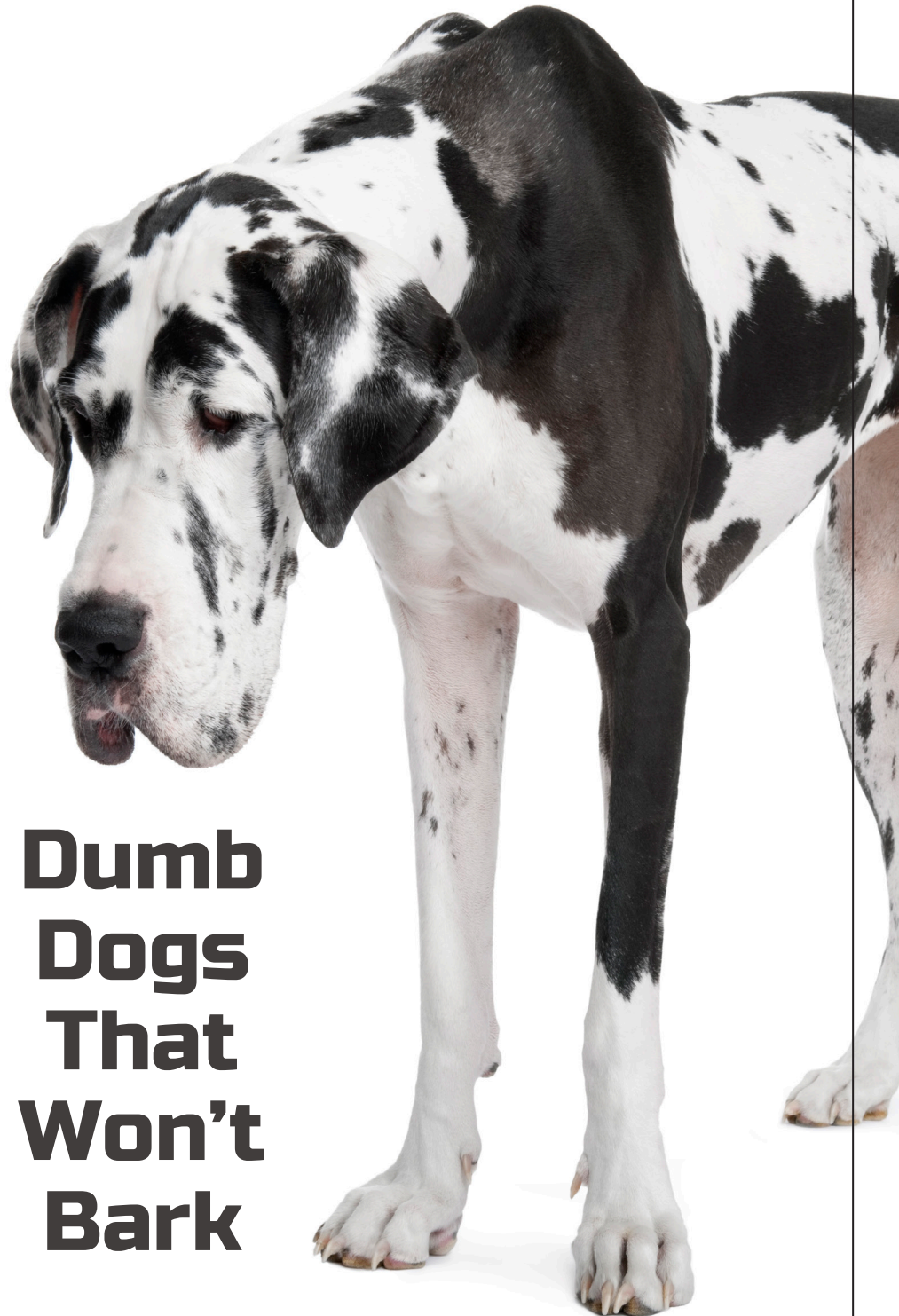
LAYMEN MINISTRIES

No. 228 A Journal Dedicated to Laymen

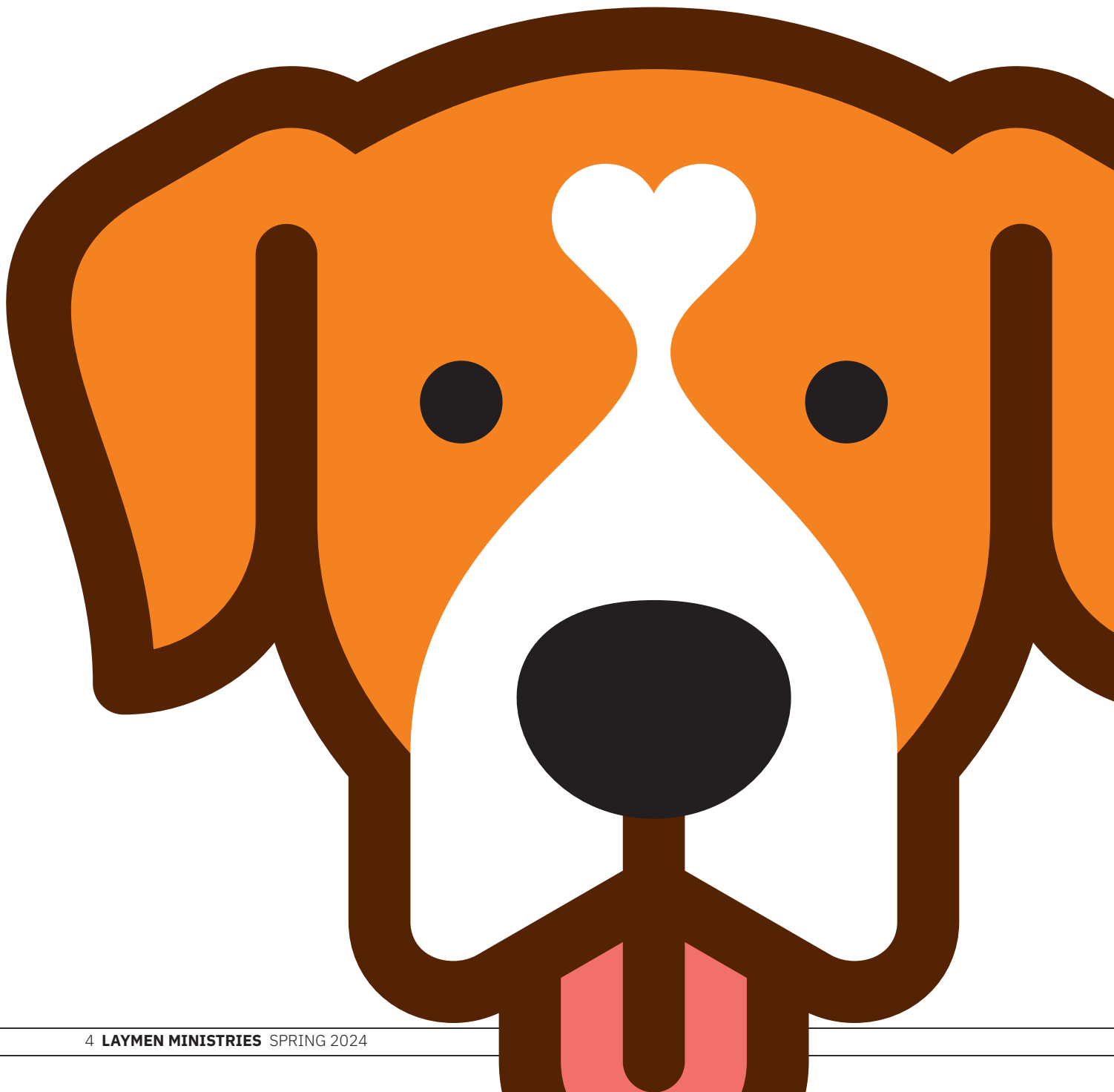
Spring 2024



**Dumb
Dogs
That
Won't
Bark**



Dumb Dogs That Won't Bark



"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isaiah 56:10).

Here Isaiah is commenting on the fact that God's watchmen are sleeping when they should be awake. Like watchdogs that lie around indifferently, they allow the intruder to come in and steal without producing one bark.

We used to have a dog – a Border Collie-Mutt cross. Since we live way out in the country, a dog is indispensable. Besides being a friend, a dog should warn you when people come up to the house or if there is an intruder at night. A dog should chase the deer away from the front yard so they do not eat the fruit trees. It should be all part of a dog's daily duty!

To Bark or Not to Bark

Faithful watchmen need to know when to give the sound of alarm. I have seen issues, really serious issues, swept under the rug at some churches. "We do not want to offend anyone," someone might say. On the other hand, I have seen churches split over the pettiest, trifling things. Some are willing to kill a church over a small issue but let sin go unchecked on a big issue. God needs — God wants — faithful watchmen.

When God's watchmen are doing their job, and the people see that what has been said has brought a real blessing, the words of the prophet Isaiah will come to pass:

"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem" (Isaiah 52:8, 9).

I long for the day when God's people will see eye to eye! When the danger has passed and people see it for what it really was, they will be thankful for the words of warning.

A man stood beside a stream in a dense forest. Another man jumped out and pushed this man, knocking him to the ground as a tree fell in the very spot the man had just been standing. At first the man was offended at being pushed, but then looking to the spot where he had stood, he saw the tree. If not for the faithful watchman who gave the push, the man would have been killed.

There will be those who become offended at the words of the watchman. Maybe they were on the receiving end of the "bark" or the "push," and have yet to see the tree? Those who really stand in Christ will first assume that every warning has been given in a spirit to save and not lose, to heal and not hurt, to redeem and not cast away.

Different Dogs, Different Barks

I have been around a lot of different dogs, and we have two golden retrievers that we dearly love! No offence to you dog-lovers, but some dogs can be annoying. When I was dating my wife, she had a little Pomeranian. This little dog yapped all the time and was a mean ankle biter! I have seen other little dogs with attitudes. They yapped and yapped about everything. Sometimes they were afraid of their own shadow. Sometimes they seemed to believe they were bigger and tougher than they really were. I simply call them "yappy dogs."

When a yappy dog yaps, what do most people eventually feel like doing to that dog? Most likely they would like to give it the boot. And if this dog is yapping outside at night, do you pay heed to the warning? Or do you go to the door and yell, "BE QUIET!"





CHIHUAHUA CHRISTIANS

Unfortunately, there are Christians who are yappy dogs (I call them Chihuahua Christians). Thinking themselves faithful watchmen, they yap about this and yap about that, and then they wonder why people do not listen to them or even like them in the church, at work, or in the home. They make issues out of things that are simply not their business or are not important enough to make into issues.

I speak from experience. I used to create issues out of so many things in our local church and my home that I drove people away from me. I would yap to this person and yap to that person, and eventually no one really wanted to hear what I had to say except for a few other yappers who, like me, wanted to get on board.

We need to realize there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). We need to respect other people’s convictions. People need to be allowed the freedom to have different lifestyle choices than ours. There are things some people do in a church setting or at home that I would not do, but they are not things I need to coerce them into seeing and doing my way. We must “earn” the right to share truth with people. Chihuahua Christians often stick their noses where they simply should not be, all the time thinking they are faithful watchdogs.

One thing I have learned about yappy dogs is that they are often *afraid*. One of my friends has a Chihuahua. The poor little thing shakes all the time and barks at its own shadow. I can’t help but think of how fear drives many of the Chihuahua Christians. I have heard people say, “Well, we don’t think what you’re doing is wrong, but we are *afraid* of where it is going to lead.” Or “We are *afraid* where it will take us if we open the door to that (some new idea).” Do we stifle growth or new ideas simply because we are *afraid*? As Christians, we should know where we stand regarding our convictions and have sound reasons for those convictions. *Fear* should not keep us from growth, new ideas, or working in and around situations that can be uncomfortable. “Perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18). *We need higher motives and reasons for shutting down ideas or plans than fear!* Some Chihuahua Christians are church killers. They stifle any new idea or any type of change. Fear of change locks them into a dead church. They need to learn the lessons of a Great Dane!

GREAT DANES

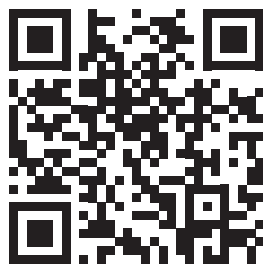
Yes, the Great Danes. They are in the class of *big dogs* — the kind that really get your attention. Historically they were used in the Middle Ages as a war dog and large mammal hunter. They know where they stand, can be aggressive as a protector and yet gentle and loving to their masters.

Let’s say you have a Great Dane in the backyard that rarely barks. One evening you hear him barking his head off. What will you do? You will run to the window or door to see what is going on outside because if he is barking, there is likely a good reason for it!

As Christians we should be like these faithful watchdogs, not *guided by fear, but by a certainty of purpose*. They know when real danger is near and will warn people about it. They are not afraid to stand up and be counted or to call sin by its right name. They’re not afraid of change where change is needed and are willing to try something new or different as long as it does not compromise principles.

Many years ago, I learned a valuable lesson. I became quiet about a lot of small incidental things, both in my home and in the church. Many “issues” would come and go, and there was no reason to get all worked up and start yapping. Much later you look back and remember those times you got all worked up, and all of that eventually became history – but often with collateral damage.

When real issues come, then speak, or bark, and people will listen. And there are certainly issues we need to bark about!



Use this code to go to our many downloadable Featured Articles



BARKING ISSUES

Today Christians are being bombarded with pluralism, secularism, and indifference. If there was ever a time we need to be faithful watchmen, it is today. Serious issues confront the church and the world. While yappers are arguing over the color of the carpet in the foyer of the church, young people are questioning the existence of God. While Satan has people hung up over singing a more modern style of music for song service, the world is headed for the final crisis.

There are churches where serious issues like adultery are swept under the carpet while church members are caught up in petty struggles for position and control. Because of the politics that church often offers, it is no wonder there is an increase of people of all ages who have lost the significance of attendance.

Church should be a "safe place" where people can find Christ; where acceptance rules in the hearts of those who love, and a straight Biblical message is heard. Churches are to be teaching centers where church members are educated in practical religion, Biblical teaching, and how to be empowered to share truth with others.

If this was the 1970's all over again and the things that are currently happening in the world and our country were taking place, we would be shocked! But here we are. Are we any different because of these changes in the last 50 years? Are we more eagerly sharing our faith because of it? We have all been, to a certain degree, conditioned. *We talk about the future, not realizing that it is already here.*


Whoever dreamed that the loss of freedoms we see transpiring would happen in our country - the downplaying of Christianity in society and a people so hungry for entertainment and diversion they have lost their focus in life? Revisionists are rewriting history, and morality has been tossed out the window. We seem to have been conditioned by lukewarm waters into an apathetic trance while the world has transformed around us imperceptibly and that lamb-like beast has shed its skin for that of a dragon.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

We should now be educating ourselves as to the real issues — understanding what it really means to be "Great Dane" Christians. Instead of zoning out night after night in front of a TV, time should be spent on studying the truth and building friendships with people outside the church. We should do our best to make church a happy place where contention does not separate friends over petty issues. We need to uphold the truth as it is in Christ at church, home and work. Kindness needs to be the ruling force that wins people's hearts and bonds the church members. We need to be people of principle and not merely of policies.

Let's keep in mind the highest principles. I realize the heart is the greatest issue - the principle of principles. Where is the heart? Have we taken the time to earn the privilege to share certain truths with those we meet? One of my kids once told me, "Dad, you're really good at majoring in the minors!" Now that was a reality check!

A faithful watchdog warns of danger. He knows when to bark and when not to. A winning heart, kind ways and a firm belief have proven, over the years, to have an effect on people. Yes, many today are indifferent to the truth. We can try to share, but many will turn away in disinterest. However, a winning spirit, a kind heart, and a helpful hand will open many a mind to the truth. We need not be afraid to speak the truth. More importantly, we need to live the truth.

If you have fallen away from God, now is the time to rethink your priorities. If you have slipped into spiritual indifference, ask God to help you to get back on your feet. Put forth effort to reconnect with God through study and prayer and good fellowship. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to where we are in this world's history and to things of greater importance than just yourself. God is calling you. Are you listening? He wants you to be a faithful watchdog, warning people of the crisis ahead and sharing the hope we can find in Christ. *"To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"* (Hebrews 4:7). 

A faithful watchdog warns of danger. He knows when to bark and when not to.

